Itihasa 8

Wakako Mizuki

The snow stops people
in their tracks...
Both their feet...
and their minds...

Gods stop people
in their tracks...
Both their feet...
and their minds...

Itihasa
Part III: Fuji/Amane

Recap & Main Characters

<Part I>

As foretold by an oracle two generations ago, the gods that can be seen—divided into the warring demigods and demon gods—have traveled to this once-peaceful island, and the kind-hearted tribes who worship the gods that cannot be seen have become embroiled in their war. Toko's tribe is attacked by the Kiyu Faction, a group of demon gods under Kiyu the Silver Horned God.

Takaya, Toko and Aohiko, who were in the mountains looking for yang stones and escaped the attack, meet the demigod Risson, God of the True Law, and his warriors (including Katsura and Ichirota). The three decide to join the group in its pursuit of the demon gods.

One day, Takaya is badly injured and near death. To save him, Toko chants a mantra that transfers her own life force to him. As a result, Toko herself is left in serious condition. As she hovers between life and death, another Toko (!?) appears and guides her towards life. Her other self tells her that they are fated to kill each other when they meet again.

Katsura falls in love with Aohiko. However, conscious of the dark fate that will swallow him up in a few years' time, Aohiko is unable to accept her feelings. On hearing this, Katsura privately vows to hide her feelings and protect Aohiko for as long as she lives.

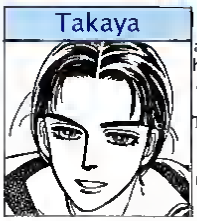
One day, seven years later, a hermit named Misen looks into Toko's past. Toko learns she has a twin who was kidnapped as a child and turned into one of Kiyu's warriors. Takaya is kind as ever to Toko in her state of shock, unaware that she has come to love him as more than just a brother. One day, shaken by the appearance of a woman named Kiriko, Toko confesses her feelings to Takaya, creating a rift between the two. However, when Kiriko dies of an illness, Toko resolves to make a fresh start as Takaya's little sister.

<Part II>

While Toko and Takaya are away from the demigod camp, it is completely surrounded by demon-god warriors. Takaya leaves Toko out of harm's way and enters the battle. Meanwhile, Koma and the youth group attempt to escape. However, demon-god warriors, including Toko's twin Yoko, lie in wait for them. Toko arrives on the scene as if called there by Yoko and is run through by a crazed Yoko's spear.

When Yoko sees Takaya receive apparently fatal wounds in the battle, she faints. Yoko starts recalling memories that can't be hers and becomes convinced that she is Toko.

After arriving in Isana, Aohiko learns that his friends have all been killed. Takaya is revived through the power of the demigod Kiyora, Goddess of Mt. Meru. Believing that Toko is dead, he swears vengeance on the demon gods.



Yoko, bearing the soul of Toko, finds Takaya and insists that she is Toko. Although Takaya does not believe her at first, he is convinced that her soul is indeed Toko's when he hears her sing a lullaby only Toko would know. He asks her to go with him to the land of Isana where Aohiko and the others are waiting for them, but Yoko is concerned about Kai and returns to Kiyu's army.

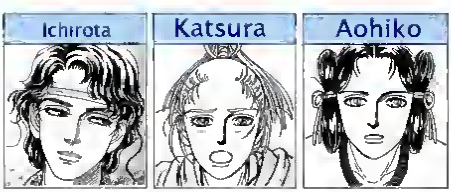
Meanwhile, Aohiko says goodbye to Katsura and proceeds alone towards Kiyu's army to defeat the enemy. The yin stone mantra proves too powerful, however, and he faints. Takaya attacks Kiyu's army in an attempt to rescue him, but Aohiko is carried away.

One day, wings suddenly start to grow out of Takaya's back. Like Kai, Takaya has Mamana blood in his veins. Meanwhile, since Toko has borrowed Yoko's body and Yoko has been fitted with a demon headband, Toko is compelled to kill people. Yachio then appears to Toko. Yachio is the one who knows the divine names of all the gods and who does what needs to be done. Yachio tells Toko to go to Fuji. However, her shock is so great that she falls into a deep sleep.

Aohiko, who is believed to hold the key to Toko's secrets, is very nearly killed by Hibiki, but thanks to Kimika's quick thinking, Ichirota saves him. With Aohiko's help, Toko sets herself free, choosing to live as both Toko and Yoko. Meanwhile, Takaya, entrusted with Risson's divine name, sets off with Katsura for Shangri-La on Fuji to save Toko and Aohiko.

Yin stone: a special stone that has negative energy. Its power is manifested through the use of mantras.

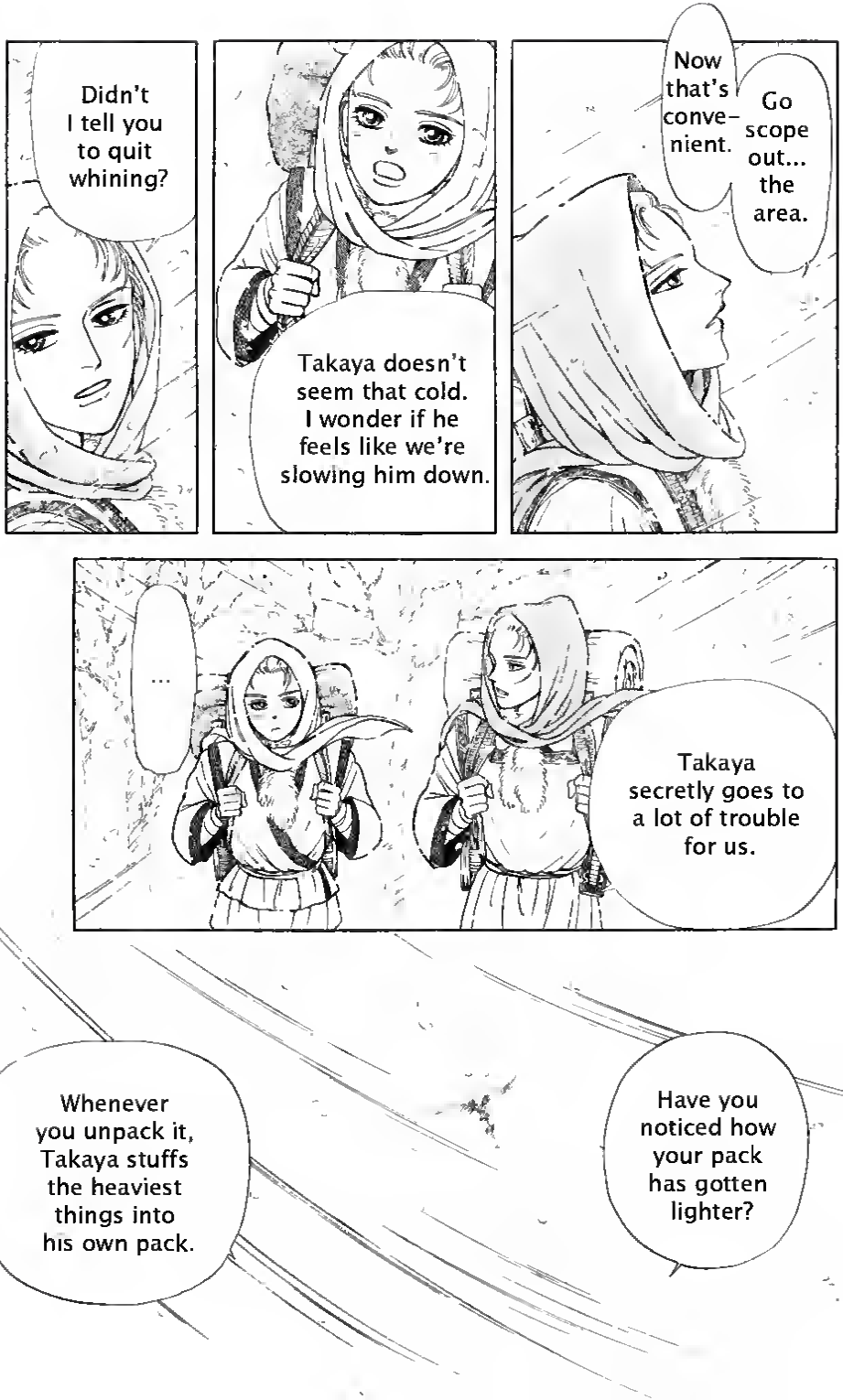
Demon headband: a headband Kiyu sets on the foreheads of his demon-god warriors. When these warriors are wounded, they go berserk.

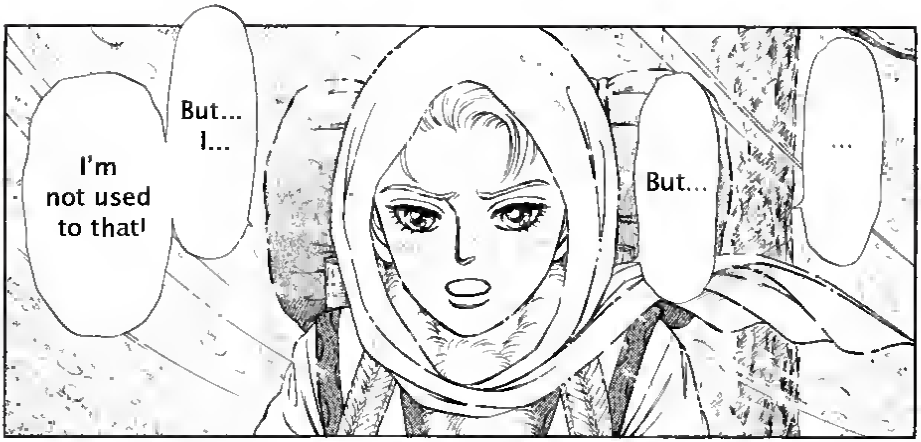


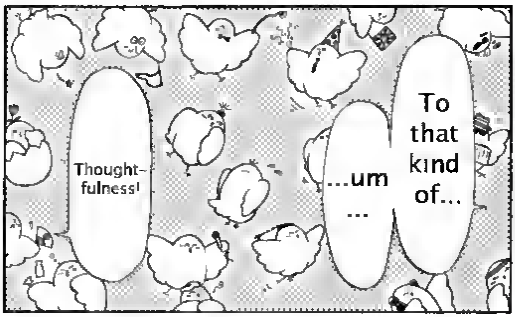
Mantra: a mysterious spell received from the gods that cannot be seen.

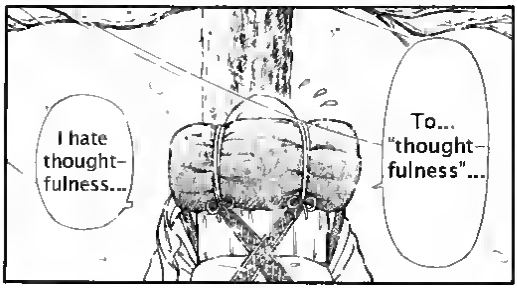
Takaya! Your feathers are getting whiter with each moulting.
I guess they change color for camouflage in the winter. Not bad, huh?
HWOOO
You snow freaks! It's freezing out here!

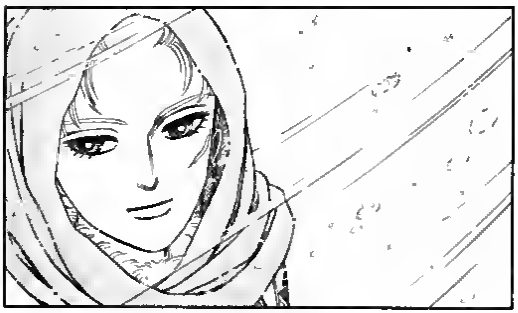
Get out of the wind and rest!
Mane or not, cold is cold!
Your back's warm, isn't it!? Your mane has really grown.
Quit whining!
The snow gets deeper ahead...
We can't go any farther.
I'll go scope out the area...
ドサッ
WHUMP
...to see if there's a village where we could spend the winter...
FWOOSH

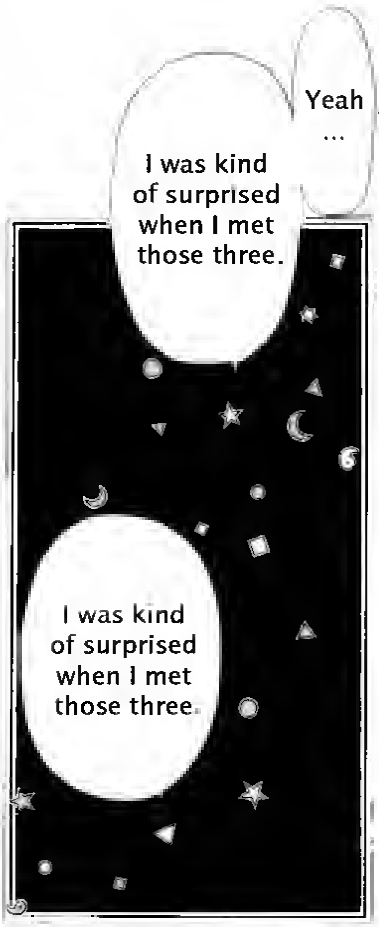

Didn't I tell you to quit whining?
Takaya doesn't seem that cold. I wonder if he feels like we're slowing him down.
Now that's conve-nient.
Go scope out... the area.
...
Takaya secretly goes to a lot of trouble for us.
Whenever you unpack it, Takaya stuffs the heaviest things into his own pack.
Have you noticed how your pack has gotten lighter?


But... I...
I'm not used to that!
But...
...


Thought-fulness!
...um ...
To that kind of...


I hate thought-fulness...
To... "thought-fulness"...




Yeah ...
I was kind of surprised when I met those three.
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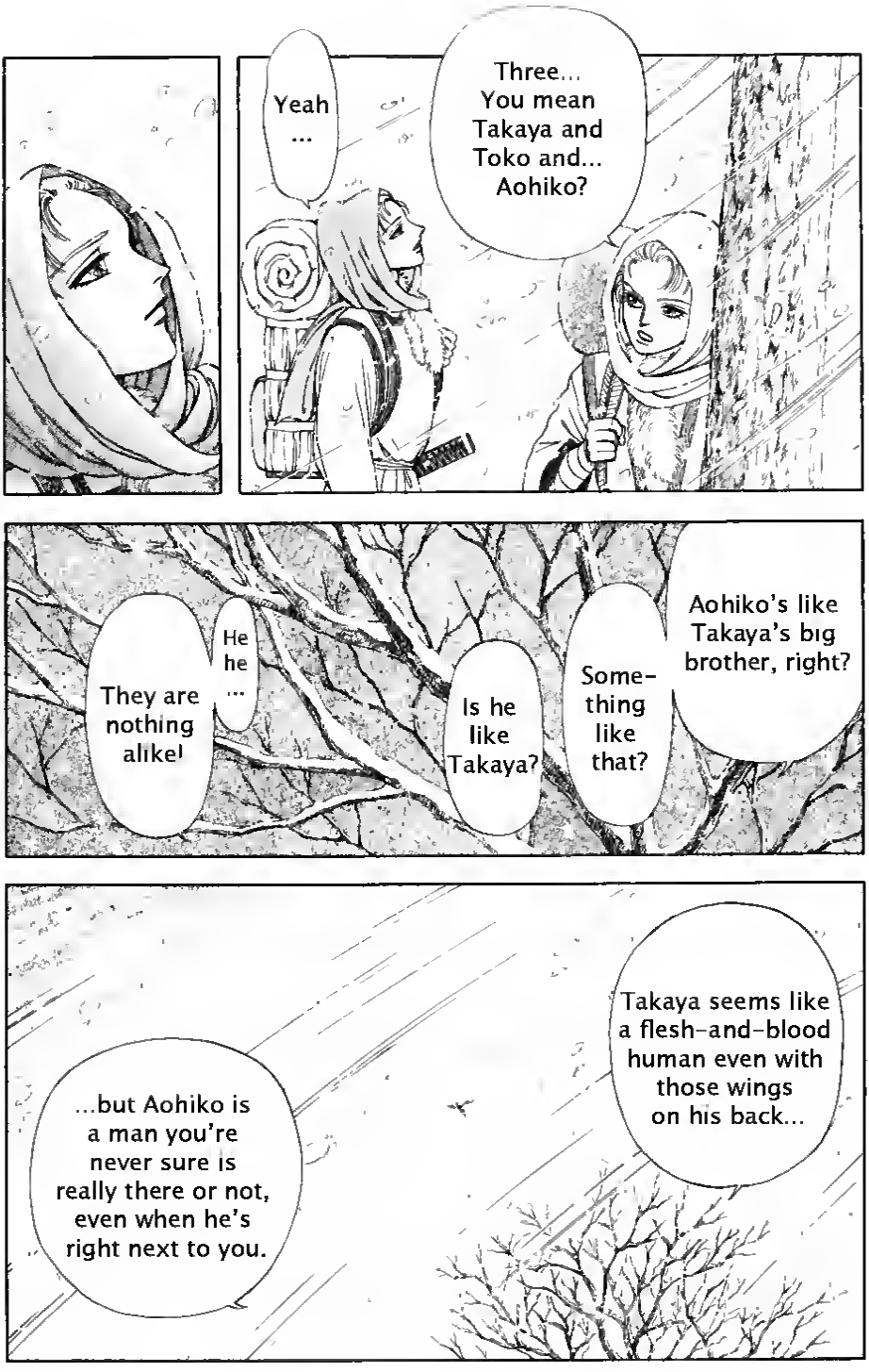
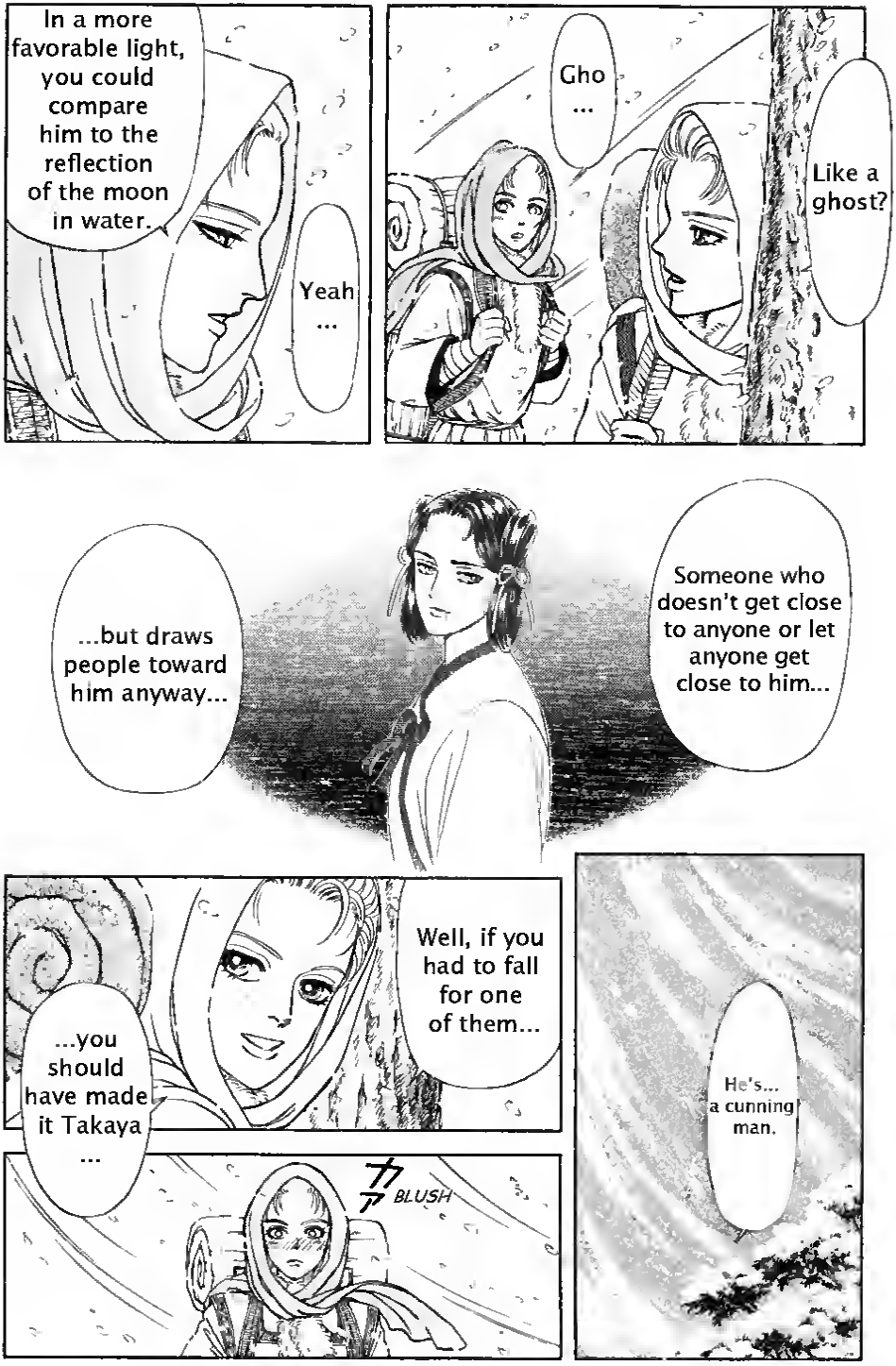

Yeah ...
Three... You mean Takaya and Toko and... Aohiko?
Aohiko's like Takaya's big brother, right?
Some-thing like that?
Is he like Takaya?
He he ...
They are nothing alike!
Takaya seems like a flesh-and-blood human even with those wings on his back...
...but Aohiko is a man you're never sure is really there or not, even when he's right next to you.


In a more favorable light, you could compare him to the reflection of the moon in water.
Yeah ...
Gho ...
Like a ghost?
...but draws people toward him anyway...
Someone who doesn't get close to anyone or let anyone get close to him...
Well, if you had to fall for one of them...
...you should have made it Takaya ...
カア BLUSH
He's... a cunning man.

I can't stand it when kids try to talk like adults!

OW!

ボスッ

SLAM

WHUMP

ボソ

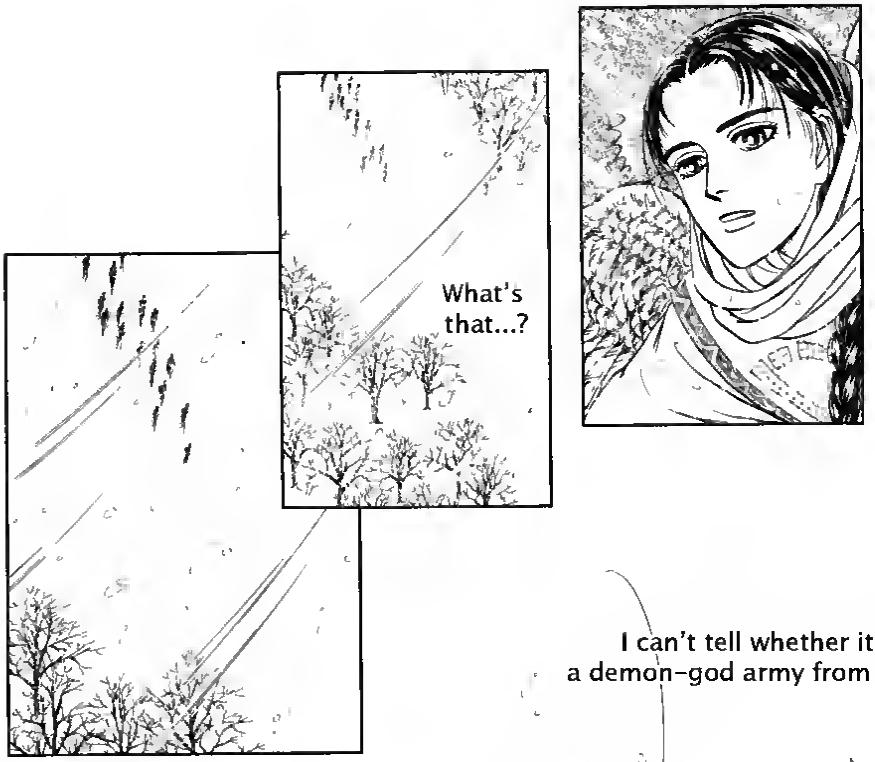
I'm not a kid!

THUD

Adults get mad when you see through them.

Hmph!

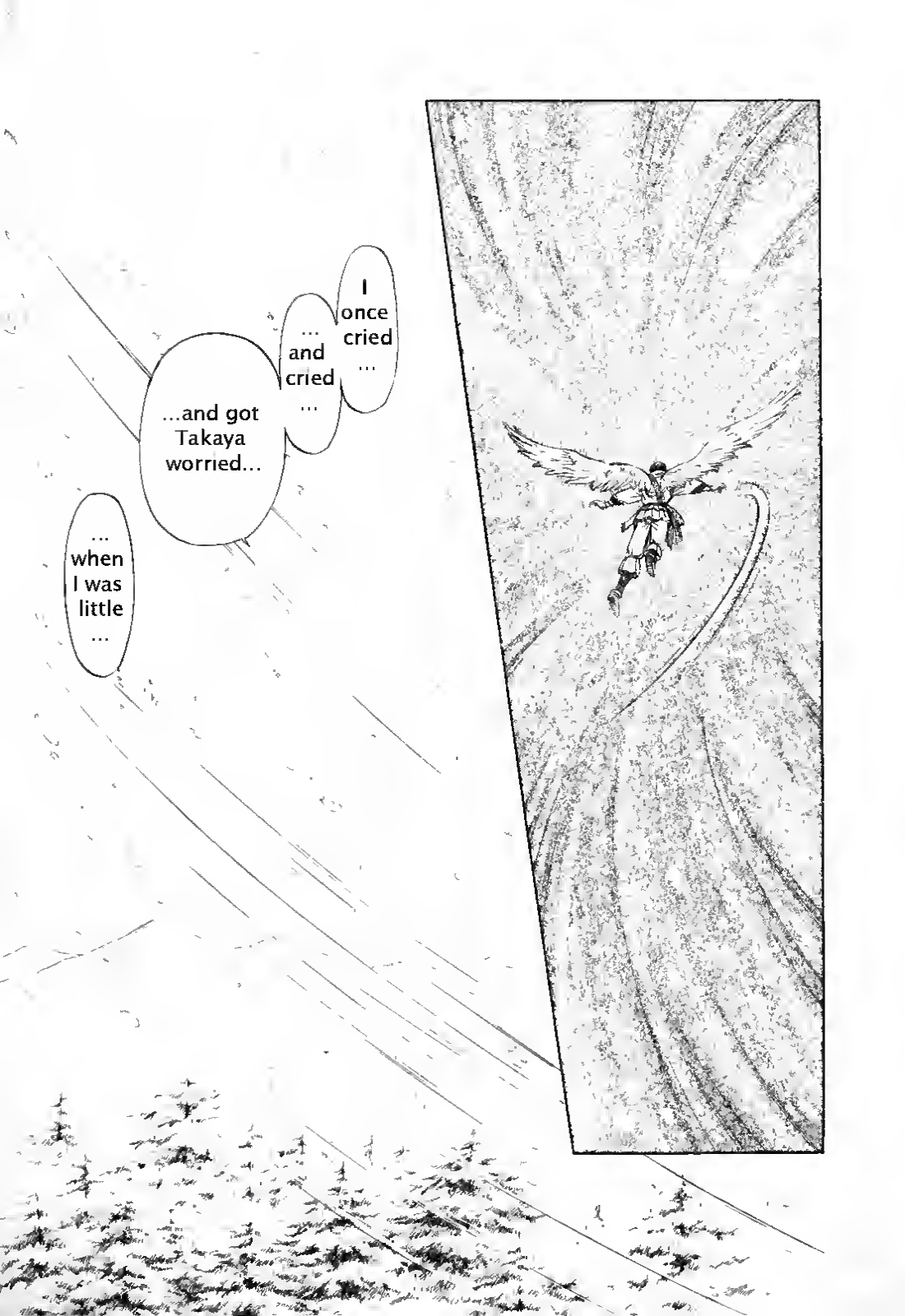
It's definitely harder
to fly when the wind is this strong...
There's one!



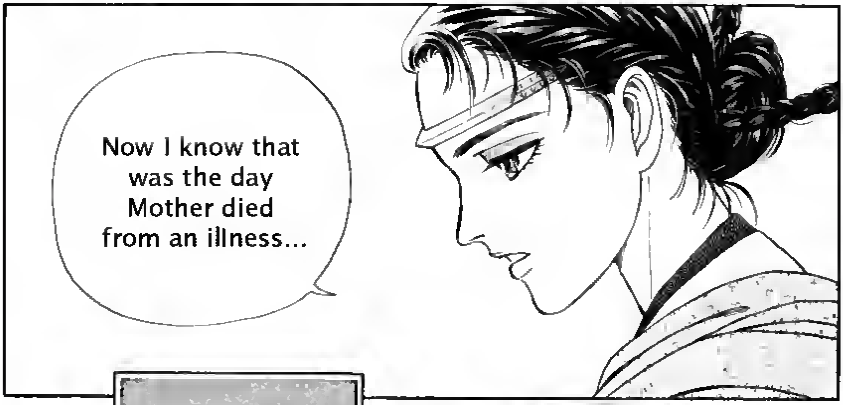
I can't tell whether it's a demon-god army from here...

I could see clearly if it weren't for this snowstorm!

This is bad!
If they keep going, they'll run into the village...
HWOO
Whoaaa!
Ugh! With this snow and headwind, I'm at a disadvantage in the sky!


I once cried ...
... and cried ...
...and got Takaya worried...
... when I was little ...

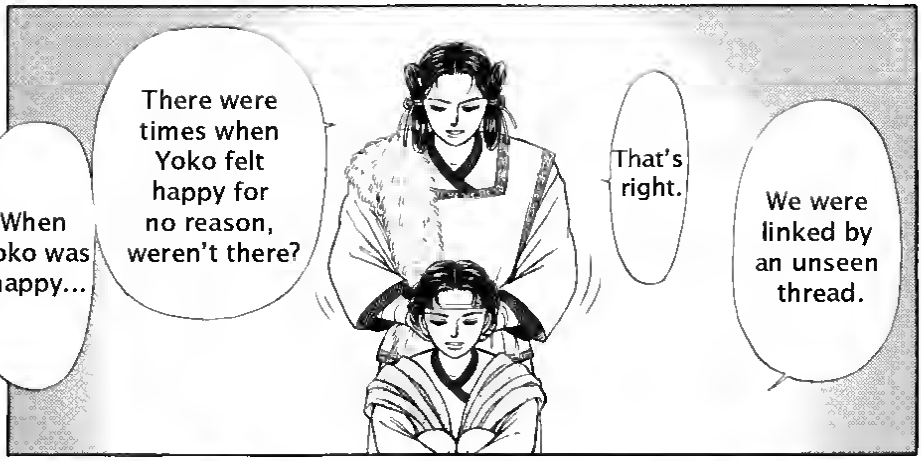
* See Volume 1



I remember Yoko ran around in the snow the next day looking for flowers for the grave...

Yeah... The flowers Yoko finally found in the snow were white camellias.
Do you remember?
Toko used to pick white camellias to put on people's graves.

* See Volume 3

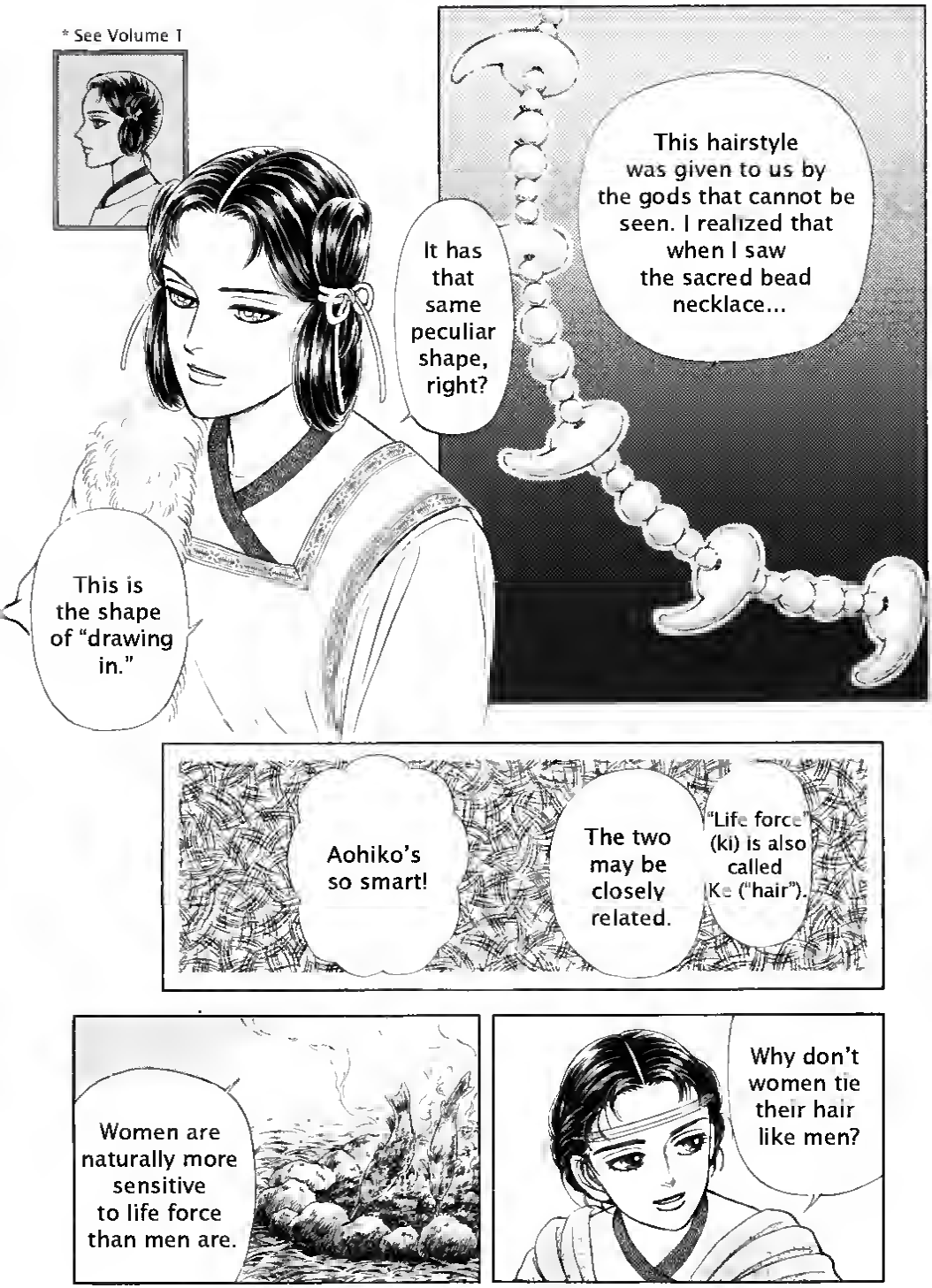

When Toko was happy...
There were times when Yoko felt happy for no reason, weren't there?
That's right.
We were linked by an unseen thread.

All done, Miss Spoiled Brat!
EHEHE

... Yeah.

Thank you...
But if you turn it into dust through your own strength...
Eventually, it will return to dust...
What did he mean... by "that"...?
...and if you turn "that" into dust, then...

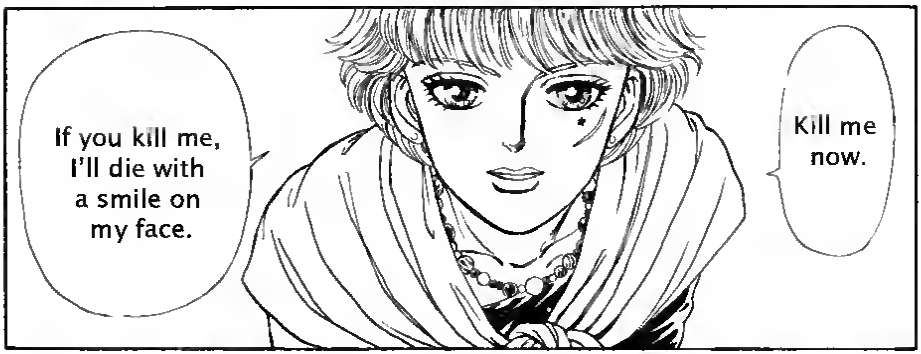
I'm so lucky I get to look after you and Aohiko!
I never get tired of this view.
What, Kyoji!?
Kee-hee-hee
Oh, Kyoji, you're the only character who's 'so lucky' in Ihasa.
But you're better at it than I am.
HEHE
You're the one who wanted your hair done!
Hurry and learn how to do your own hair.
We're not doing this to please Kyoji!
Aohi-ko's so cold.
It does flow in, although it's an im-perceptibly small amount...
Like the life force of nature follows the flow of my hair into my head.
I feel kind of strange when my hair is done up...


* See Volume 1
This hairstyle was given to us by the gods that cannot be seen. I realized that when I saw the sacred bead necklace...
It has that same peculiar shape, right?
This is the shape of "drawing in."
Aohiko's so smart!
The two may be closely related.
"Life force" (ki) is also called Ke ("hair").
Women are naturally more sensitive to life force than men are.
Why don't women tie their hair like men?

Why are women more sensitive to it?
The female body is designed to produce life, so women are superior to men at survival.
Even though women are weaker ...
... they're superior?
Women are weaker but more adaptable.
They live longer, right?
Men are strong so they can protect women, children, and the elderly.
Huh ...
Uh?
Kyoji!
Hm?
Listen to what Aohiko's saying for once!

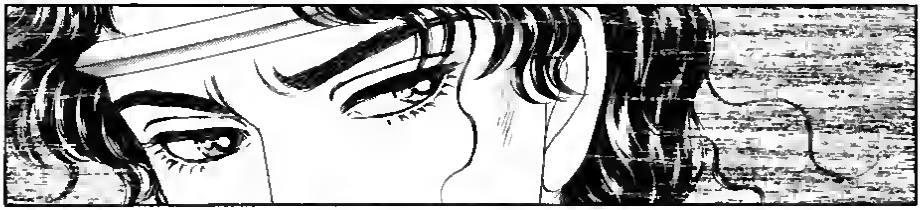
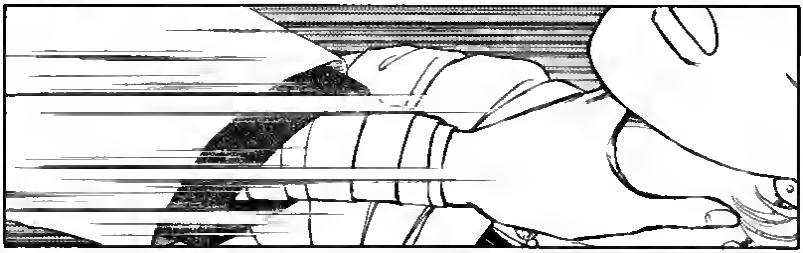
What is wrong with you!?
Did you not hear me tell you to get out!?
It's a blizzard out there! Snowing like crazy!
I'd freeze to death!
You can die for all I care!

I should have just killed you.
Thanks, but I'll pass.


If you kill me, I'll die with a smile on my face.
Kill me now.

Stay away from me...

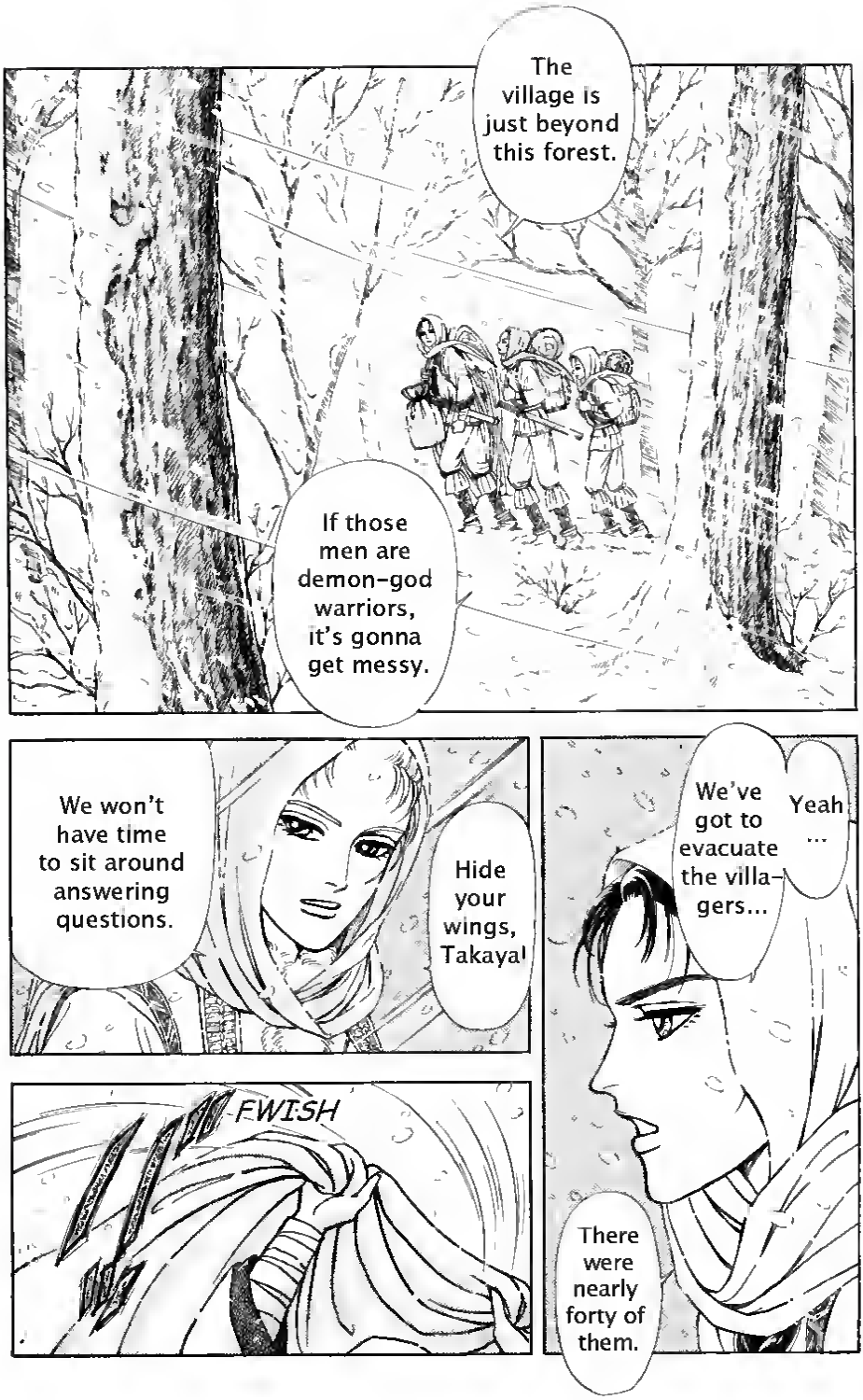
I'll give you a good time.
You enjoy killing people, right?

Does it remind you of Saki?
What, you can't kill wo-men?



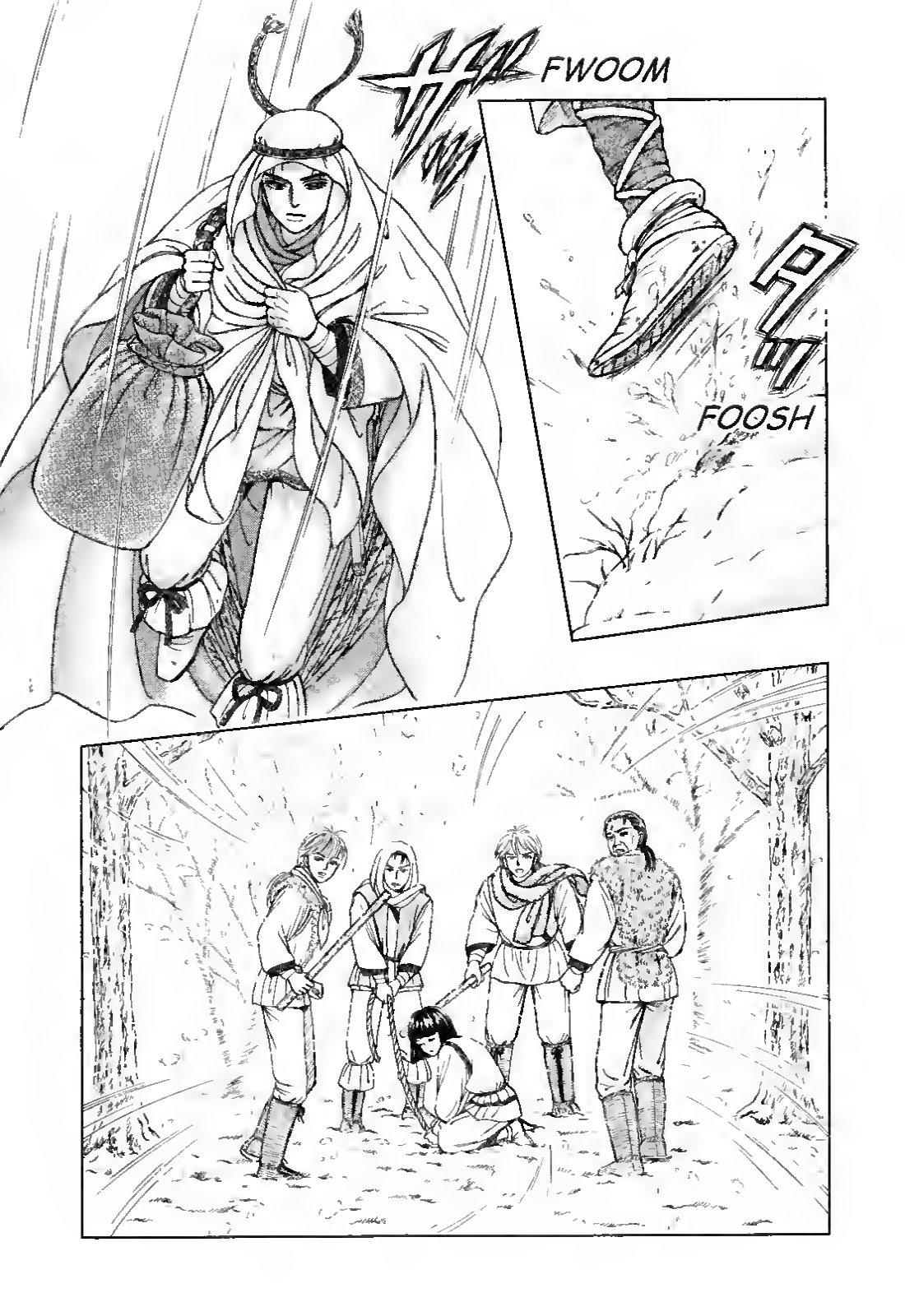
Why...
...do you know that name?
I fell in love ...
...with those eyes...
...those ...
GRIP
...lone... ly... eye...s...
GRIP

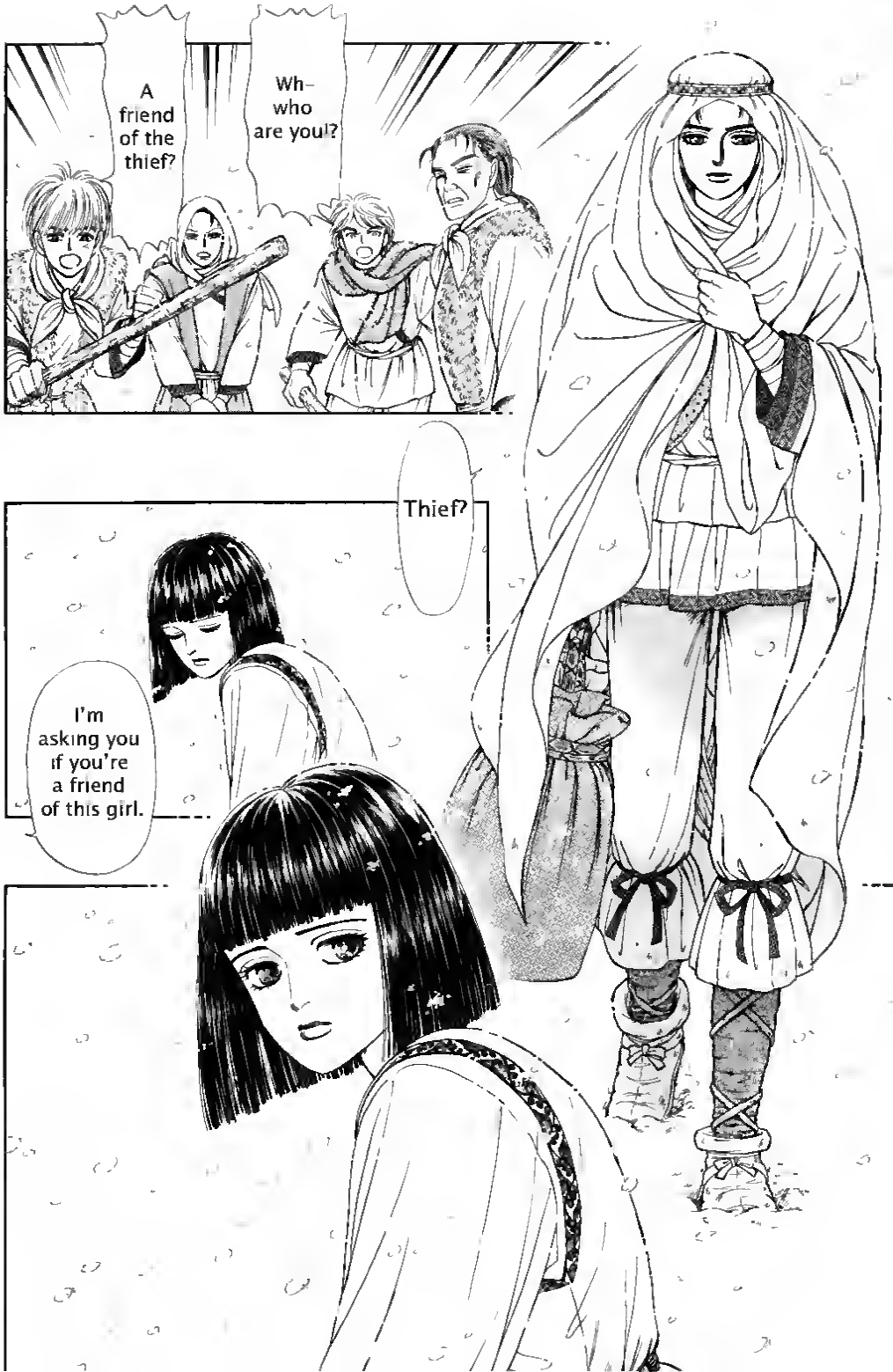
I'm
...
...
warm
...

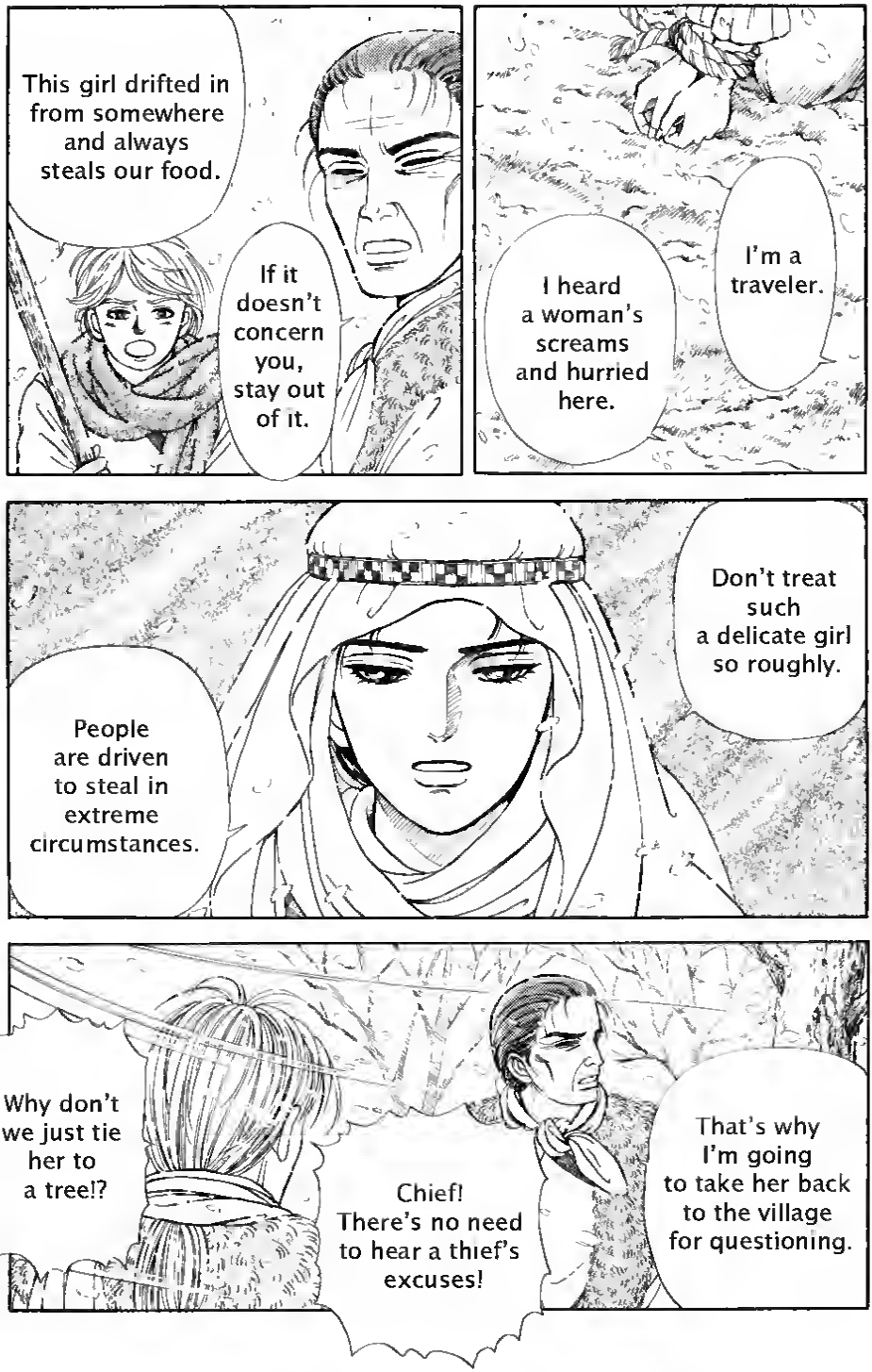
BAM
Go bury yourself in the snow!
Idiot!
I'm gonna turn into a snow-man.
This is no joke ...
BRRR
HWOOO
What! You don't like my scar!?
You shallow jerk!


The village is just beyond this forest.
If those men are demon-god warriors, it's gonna get messy.
We won't have time to sit around answering questions.
Hide your wings, Takaya!
FWISH
We've got to evacuate the villagers...
Yeah...
There were nearly forty of them.

I'll go ahead. Stay alert and follow me!
FWISH
I hear it too!
I heard a woman screaming...
Taka-ya...
Told ya!
Wow. We really are slowing him down.
He's running across the snow...
That's odd.
At that distance, we should have gotten there first.


FWOOM
FOOSH


A friend of the thief?
Wh- who are you?
Thief?
I'm asking you if you're a friend of this girl.

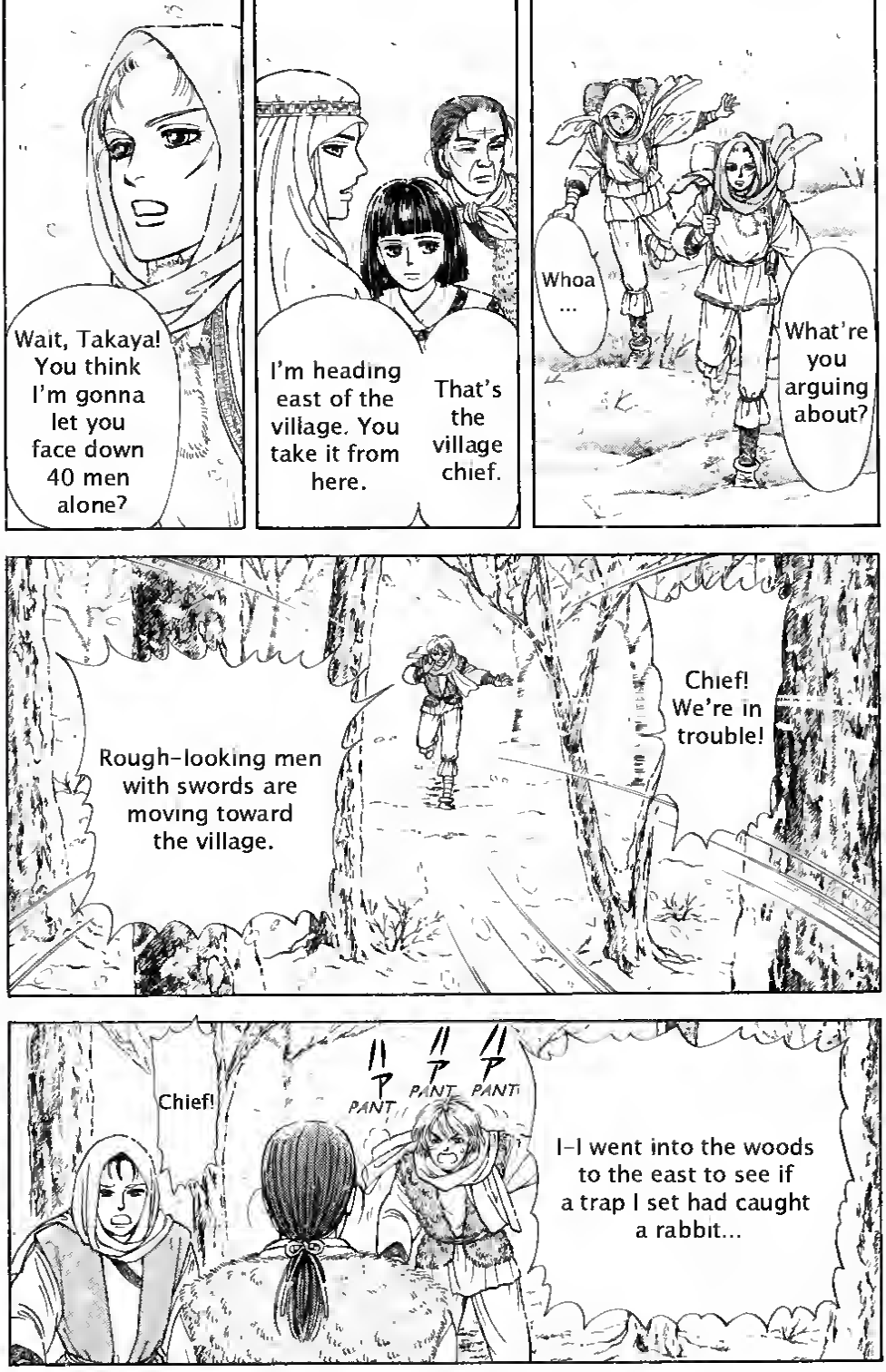

This girl drifted in from somewhere and always steals our food.
If it doesn't concern you, stay out of it.
I heard a woman's screams and hurried here.
I'm a traveler.
People are driven to steal in extreme circumstances.
Don't treat such a delicate girl so roughly.
Why don't we just tie her to a tree!?
Chief! There's no need to hear a thief's excuses!
That's why I'm going to take her back to the village for questioning.

H-hey ...
SHING
SHUF
Doesn't seem like the friendliest village...
You won't run?

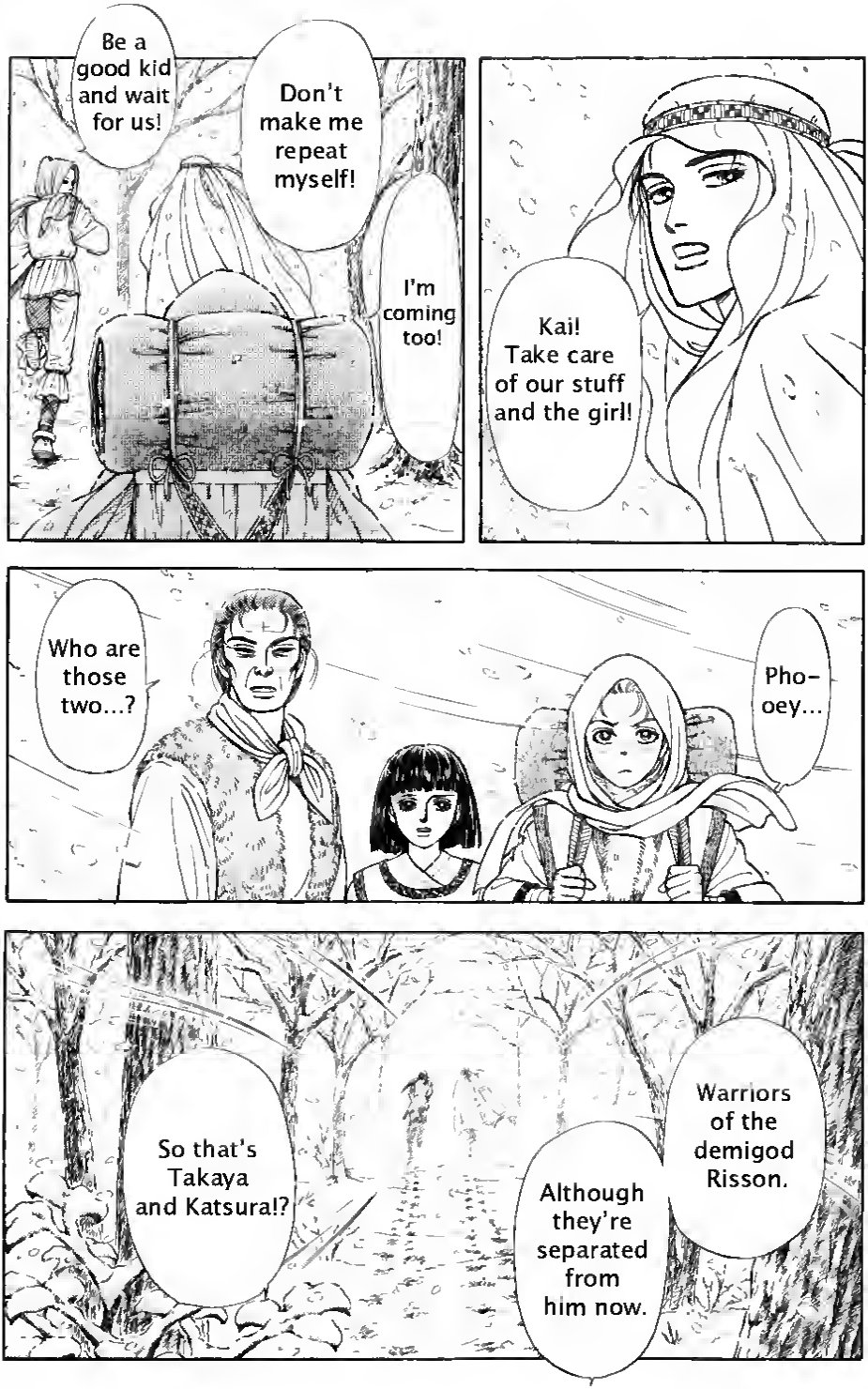
You'd better stand. You're gonna freeze like that.
SHUNK
NOD
Stop shou-ting.
What do you think you're doing!?
Sorry, but I can't allow people with swords into the village.
So you're the village chief...
I was actually on my way to visit your village.

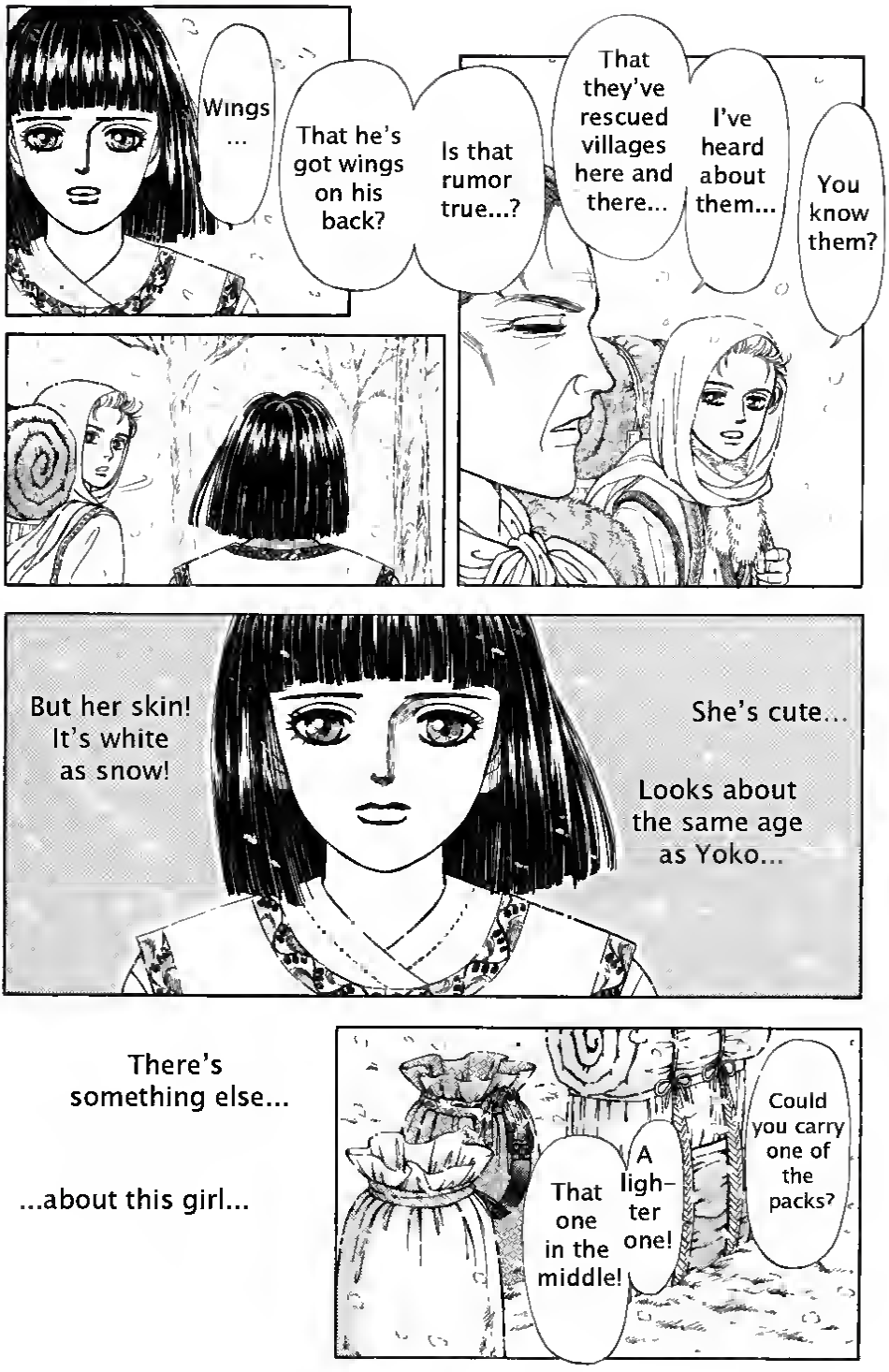
That's too bad, but I have some more urgent news.
A large number of men are heading this way from the east.
And they're carrying those swords you dislike so much.
If they're demon-god warriors, your village is in danger.
I'll go check it out. You should evacuate the villagers to a safe place for now.
Doesn't make sense ...
We're west of the village.
How would you know what's going on in the east from here?
I...

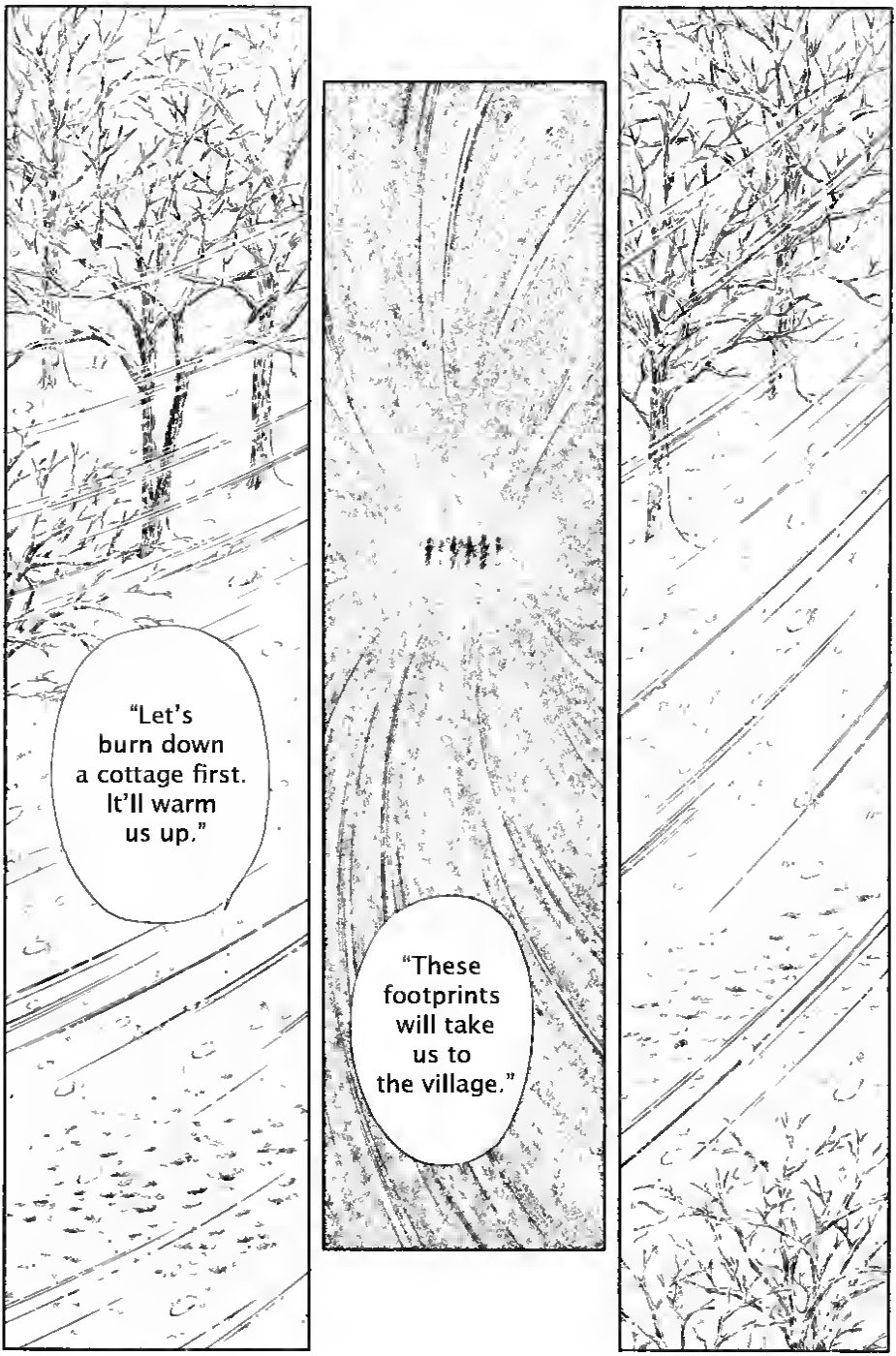
This guy reminds me of Koma...
Stop shou-ting.
You want to evacuate the village so you can loot it!
You're a thief, too, aren't you!?
PANT/ PANT
PANT
We finally caught up with you...
Taka-ya!
Okay ...
STOP SHOU-TING!
See!? They're his buddies! A band of thieves!

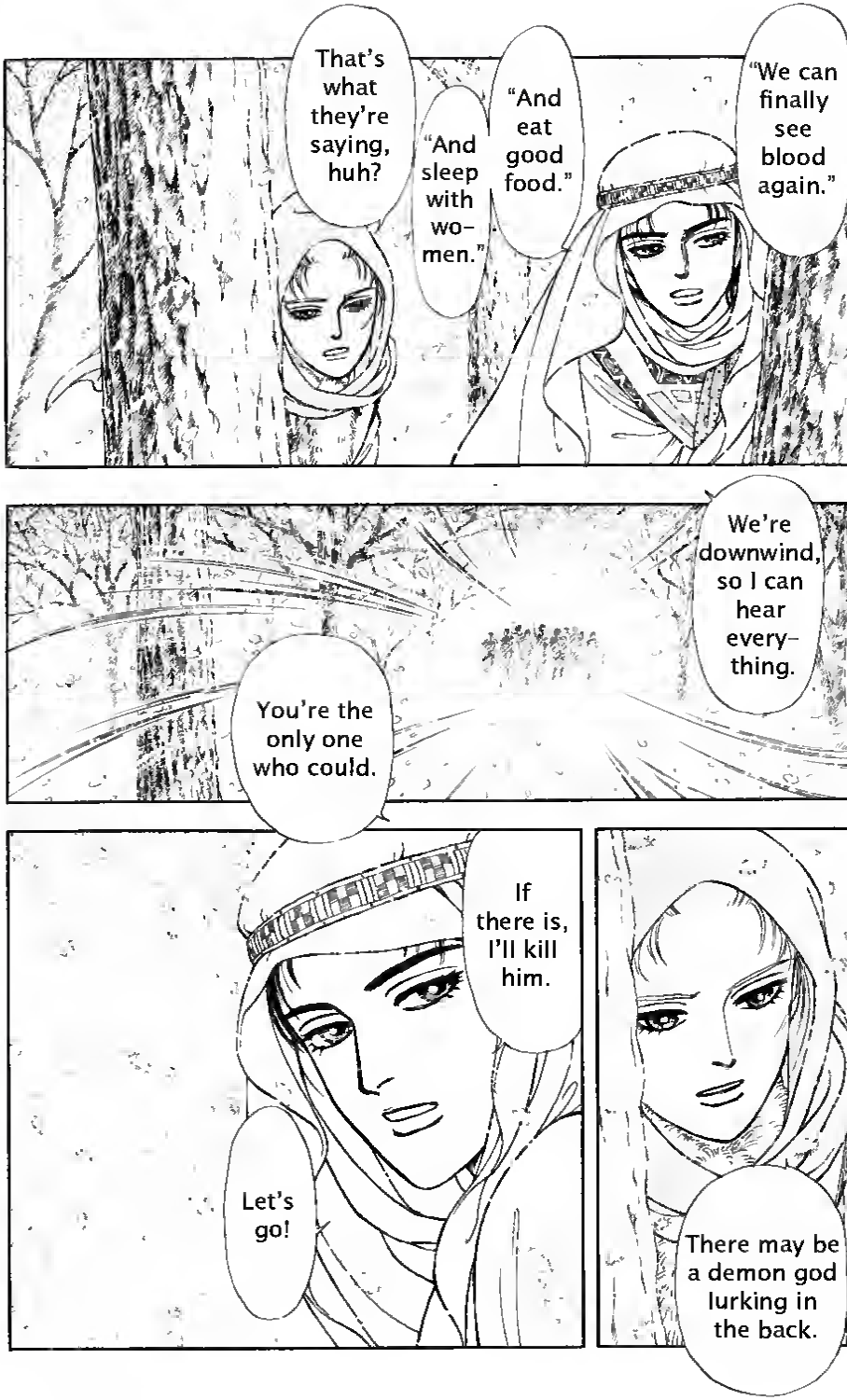

Wait, Takaya! You think I'm gonna let you face down 40 men alone?
I'm heading east of the village. You take it from here.
That's the village chief.
Whoa ...
What're you arguing about?
Rough-looking men with swords are moving toward the village.
Chief! We're in trouble!
Chief!
PANT
PANT
PANT
I-I went into the woods to the east to see if a trap I set had caught a rabbit...

Hush!
Heh!
What a thought-ful guy...
Sounds like you left them a trail to the village.
Did you pass through the village on your way here?
Ack... Sorry!
Idiot! You left foot-prints!?
Evacuate everyone to the caves in the south! Don't stop to gather belongings!
Yes sir!
きゅっ
SWISH
It will help us if you hide with everyone else.
I'm afraid the villagers will just slow us down if it turns into a battle.
I'll gather our young men. Would you help us defend the village?
I'm sorry for doub-ting you!


Be a good kid and wait for us!
Don't make me repeat myself!
I'm coming too!
Kai! Take care of our stuff and the girl!
Who are those two...?
Pho-oey...
So that's Takaya and Katsura!?
Although they're separated from him now.
Warriors of the demigod Risson.

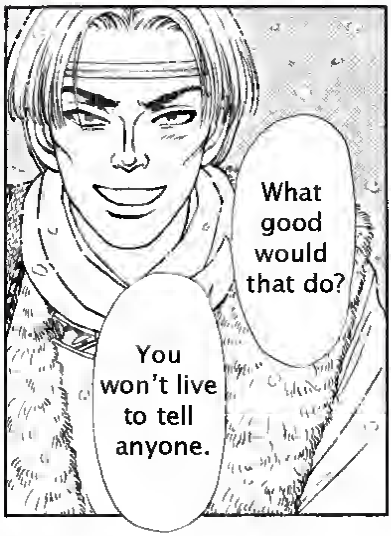

Wings ...
That he's got wings on his back?
Is that rumor true...?
That they've rescued villages here and there...
I've heard about them...
You know them?
But her skin! It's white as snow!
She's cute...
Looks about the same age as Yoko...
There's something else...
...about this girl...
That one in the middle!
A ligh- ter one!
Could you carry one of the packs?

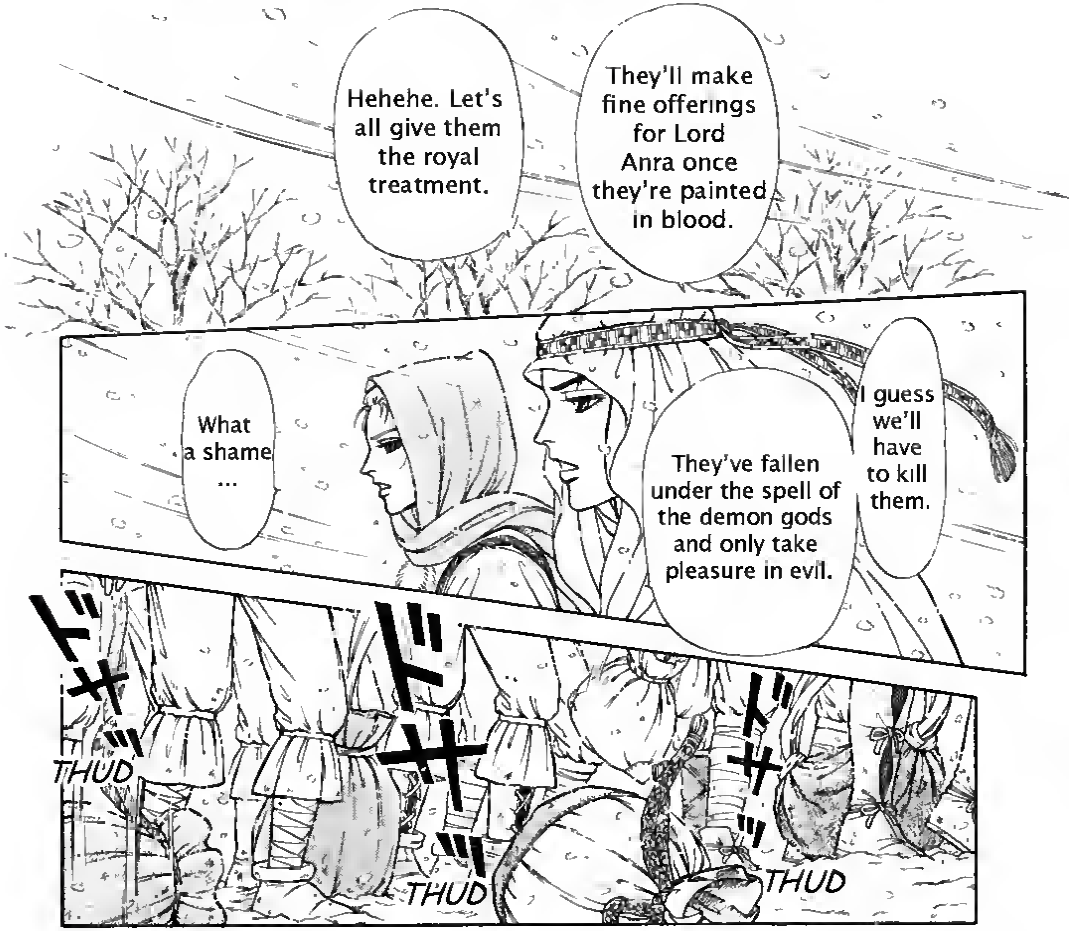

"Let's burn down a cottage first. It'll warm us up."
"These footprints will take us to the village."


That's what they're saying, huh?
"And sleep with wo-men."
"And eat good food."
"We can finally see blood again."
We're downwind, so I can hear every-thing.
You're the only one who could.
If there is, I'll kill him.
Let's go!
There may be a demon god lurking in the back.

There's someone there!
H-hey!
We have no desire to stain the snow with blood!
Leave this area imme-diately!
You will not pass beyond this point!
You're demon-god warriors, right?
Tell us the name of your demon god.
You think the two of you can stop us!?
This is hyste-rical.
Who the hell are you?

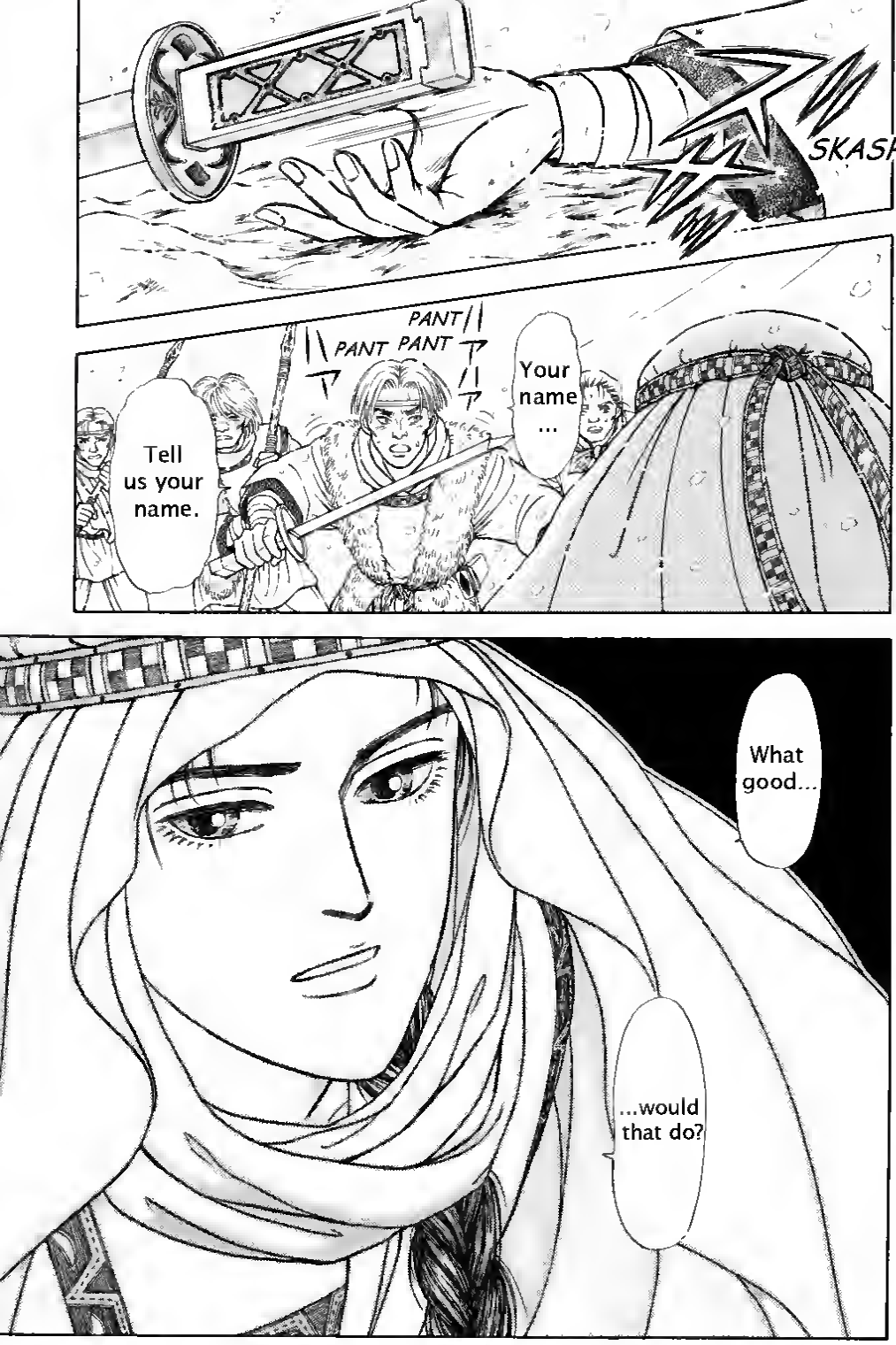
These guys are perfect.
It'll be a sort of a parting gift.
Go on, tell him.
HA HA HA HA HA
AHAHAHA

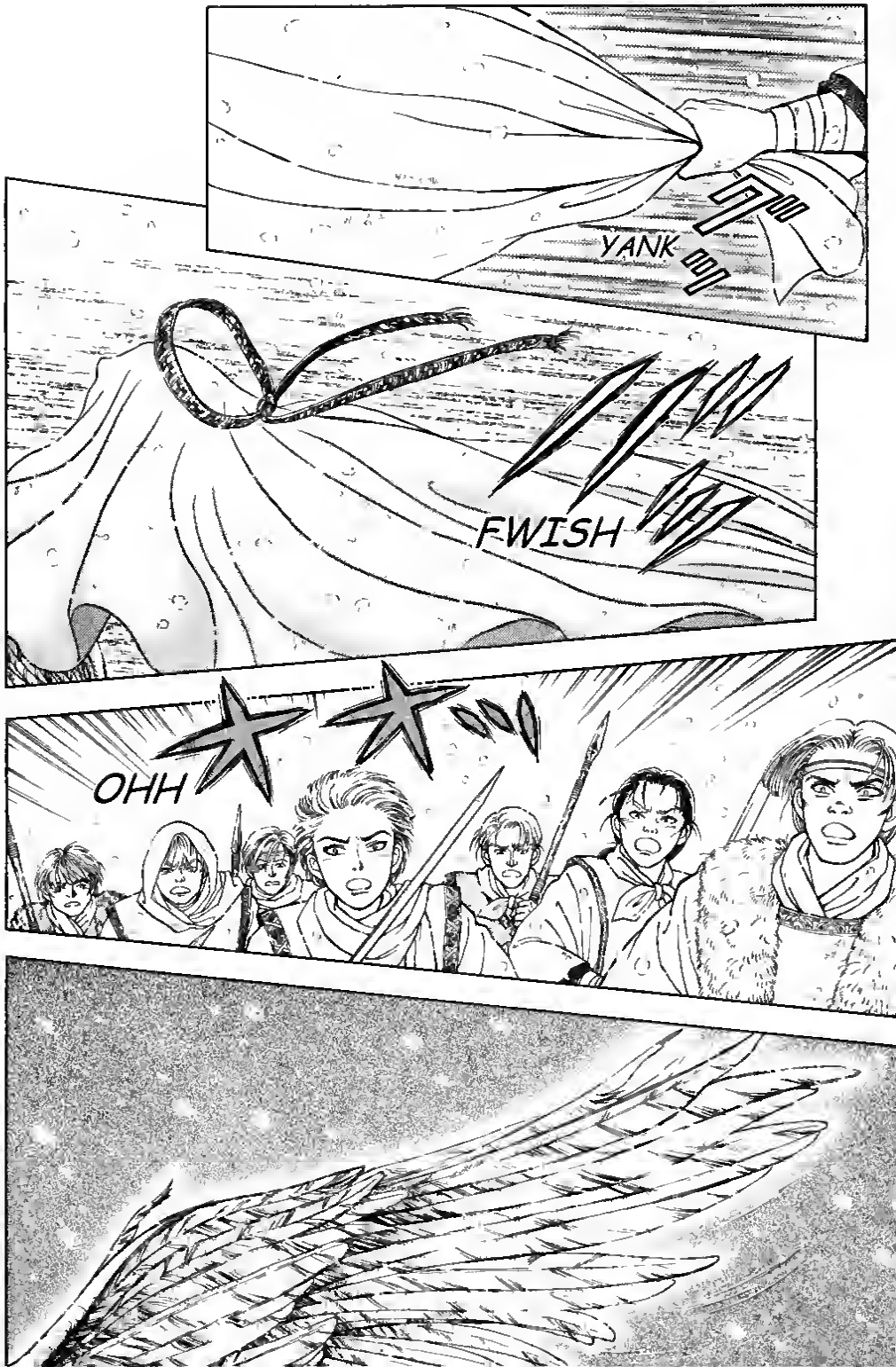

What good would that do?
You won't live to tell anyone.


Hehehe. Let's all give them the royal treatment.
They'll make fine offerings for Lord Anra once they're painted in blood.
What a shame ...
They've fallen under the spell of the demon gods and only take pleasure in evil.
I guess we'll have to kill them.
THUD
THUD
THUD

Get 'em!
RUSH
SHING
HAAH!
SHING

キン
CLANG
キン
CLANG
SLASH
キン
CLANG
キン
CLANG
HAAH!
These are no ordinary men!


SKASH
PANT
PANT
PANT
Tell us your name.
Your name...
What good...
...would that do?


YANK
FWISH
OHH

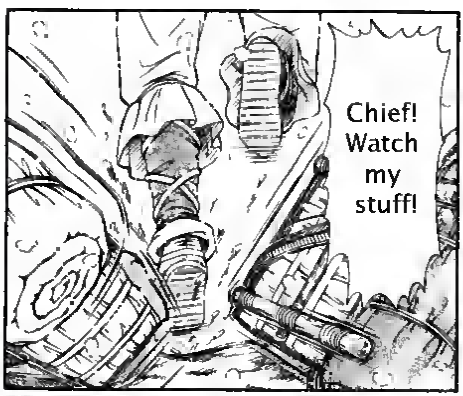
Wings
...
...Taka
...ya...?
Y–
you're
...

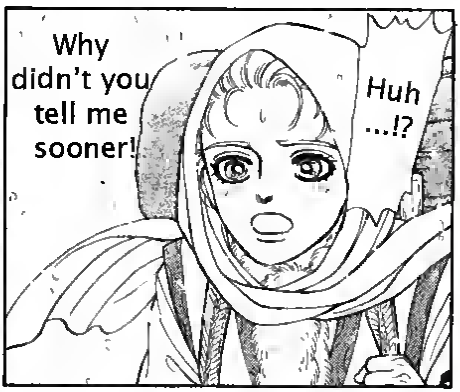
FWOOSH
Whhoa!
That's right!

...She's gone!

Oh...!

She's not one of us. She's a tramp who steals the village's food.
Chief! Where's that fair-skinned girl?


Chief! Watch my stuff!


Why didn't you tell me sooner!
Huh ...!?

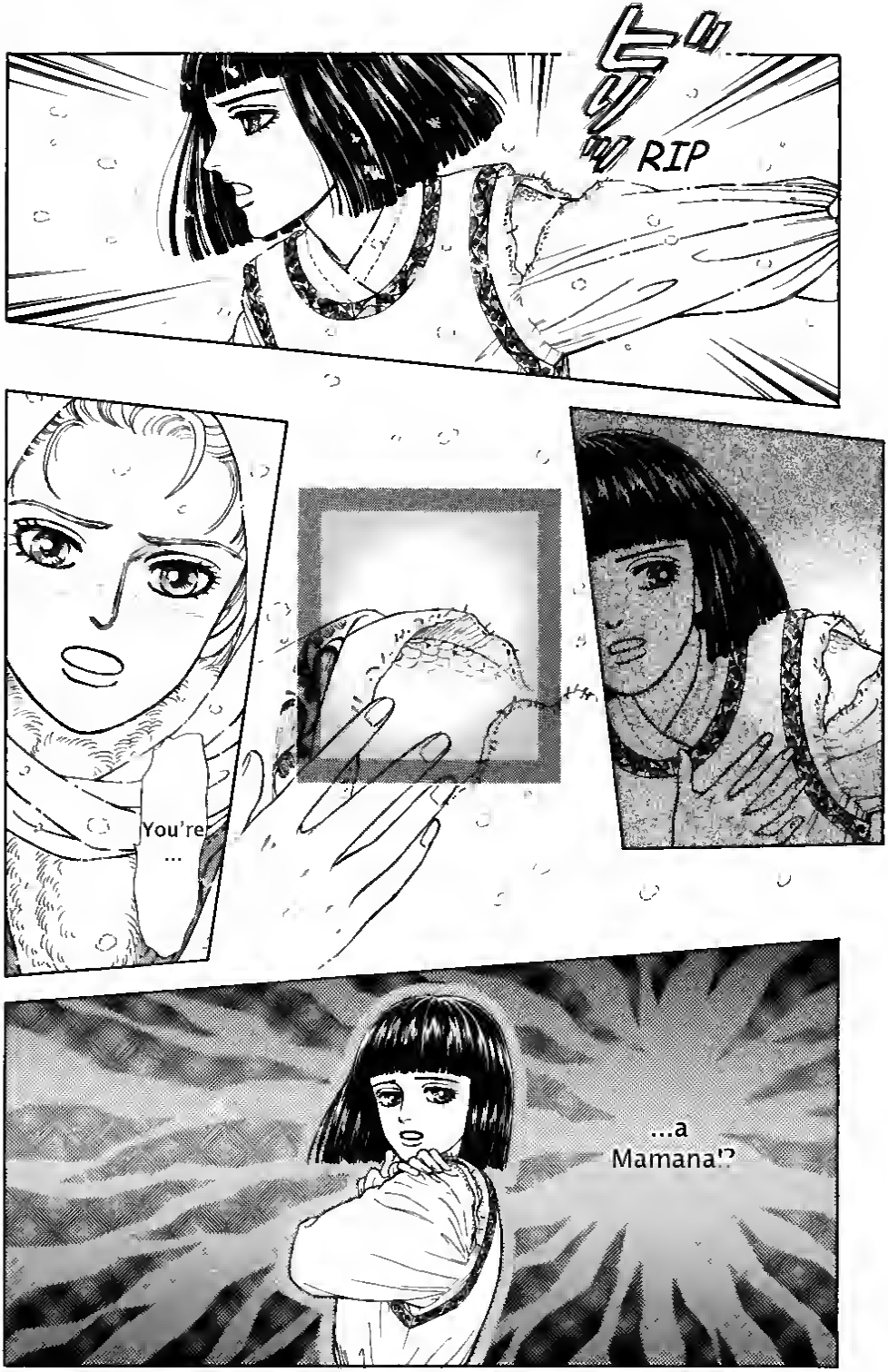
That cute–
faced wench!
Argh! She's not getting
away that easy!

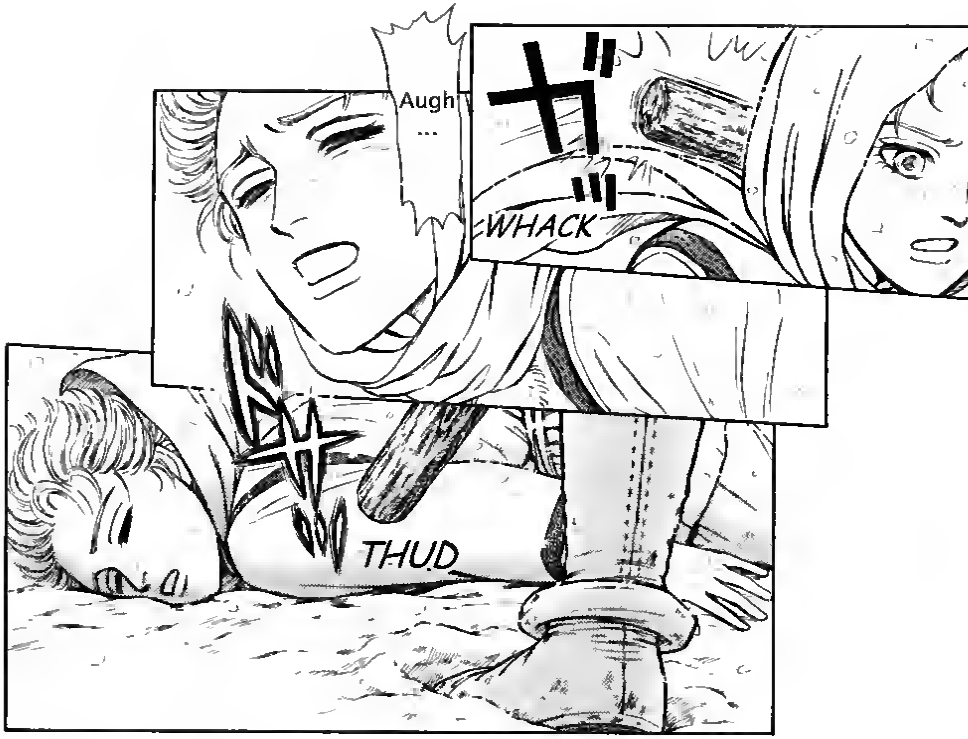
There!
Those footprints!

Found her!

Wait!

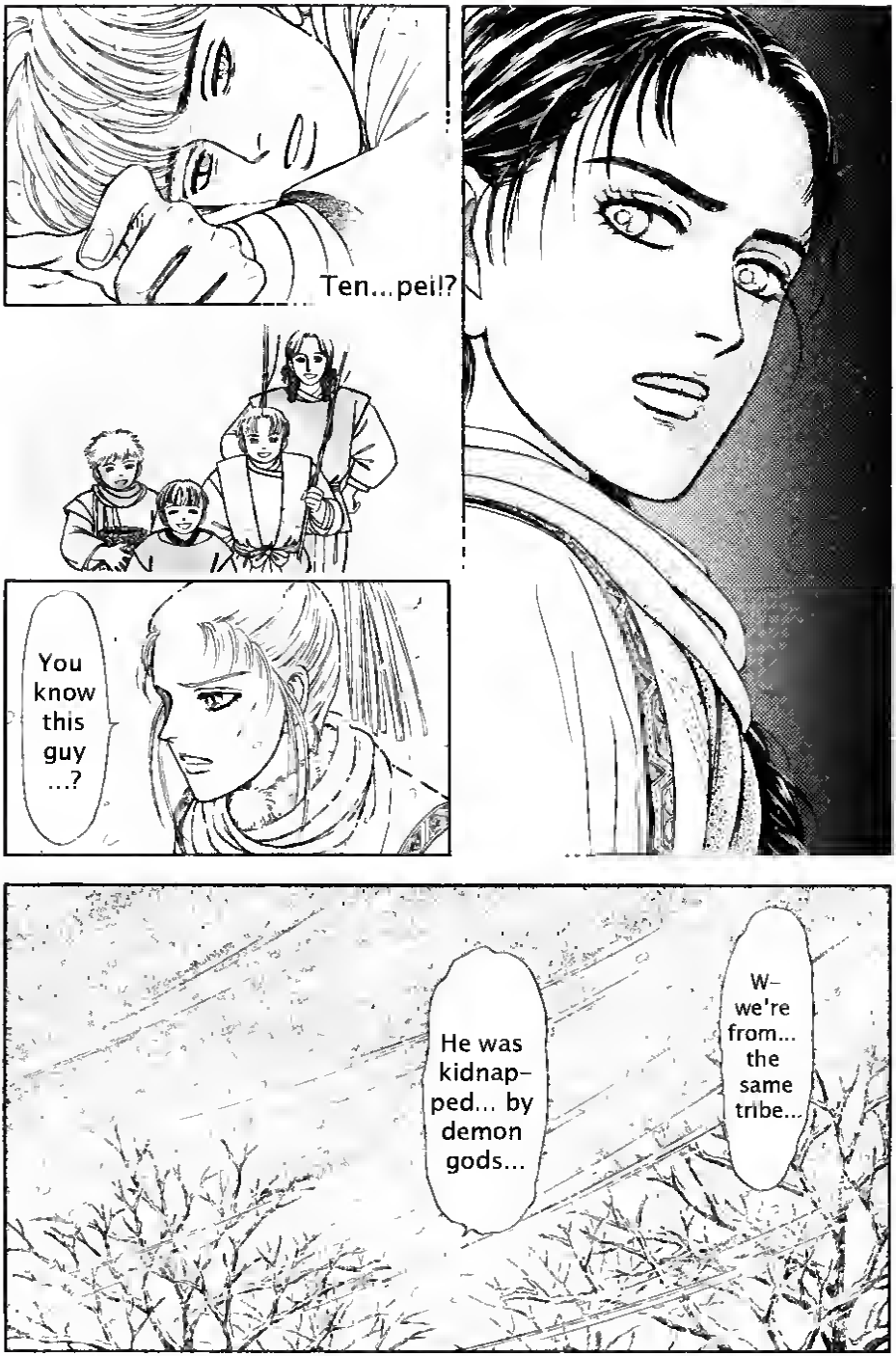
I said ...
きゃっ
SQUEEZE
きゃっ
SQUEEZE
Wait!
WHIZ
...wait!
Waaait!
Ah!
SMAK
If you stop running, I'll stop chasing you.
Don't run away.


ビリッ
RIP
You're ...
...a Mamana!?

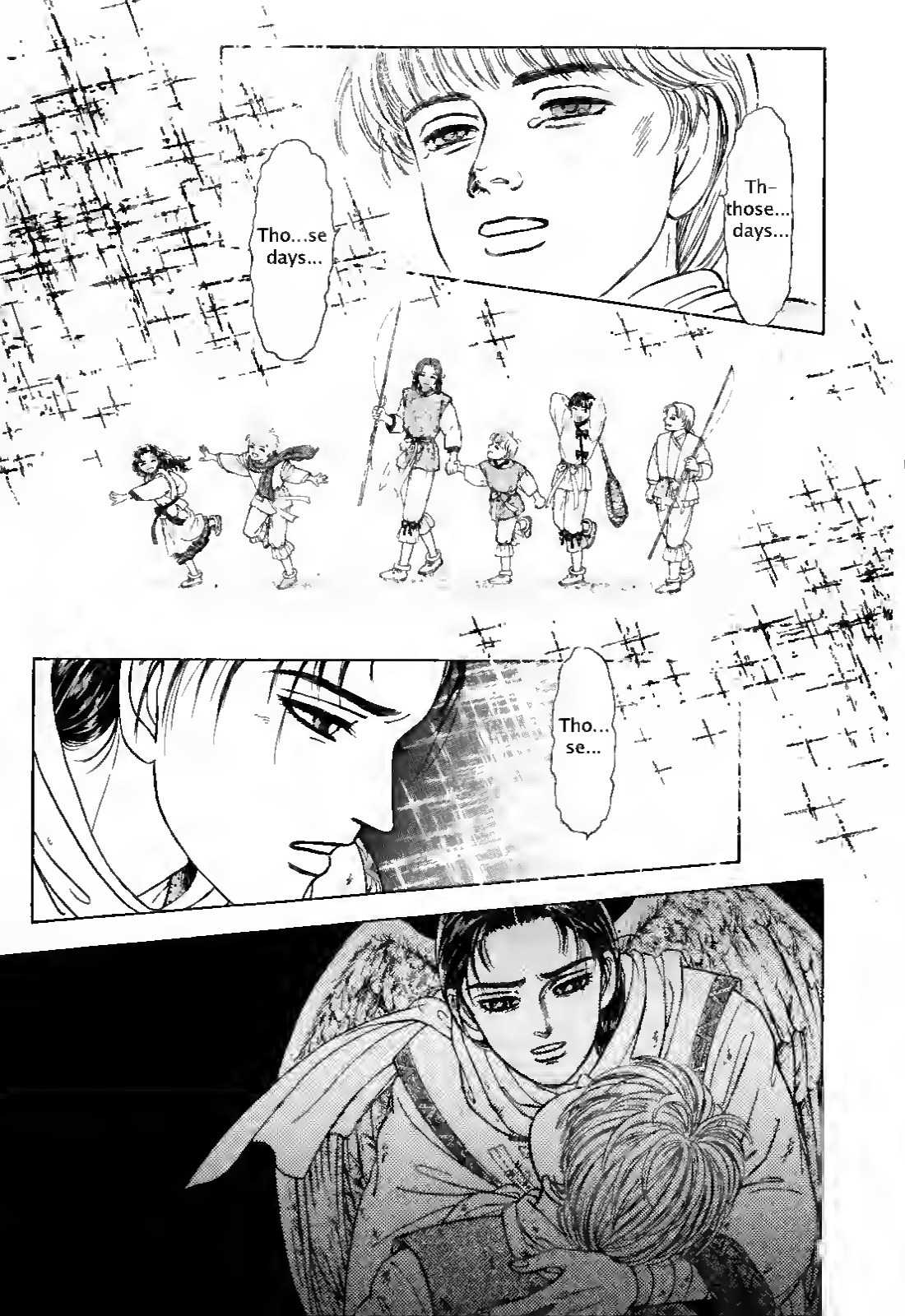

Augh
...
WHACK
THUD

HWOOO

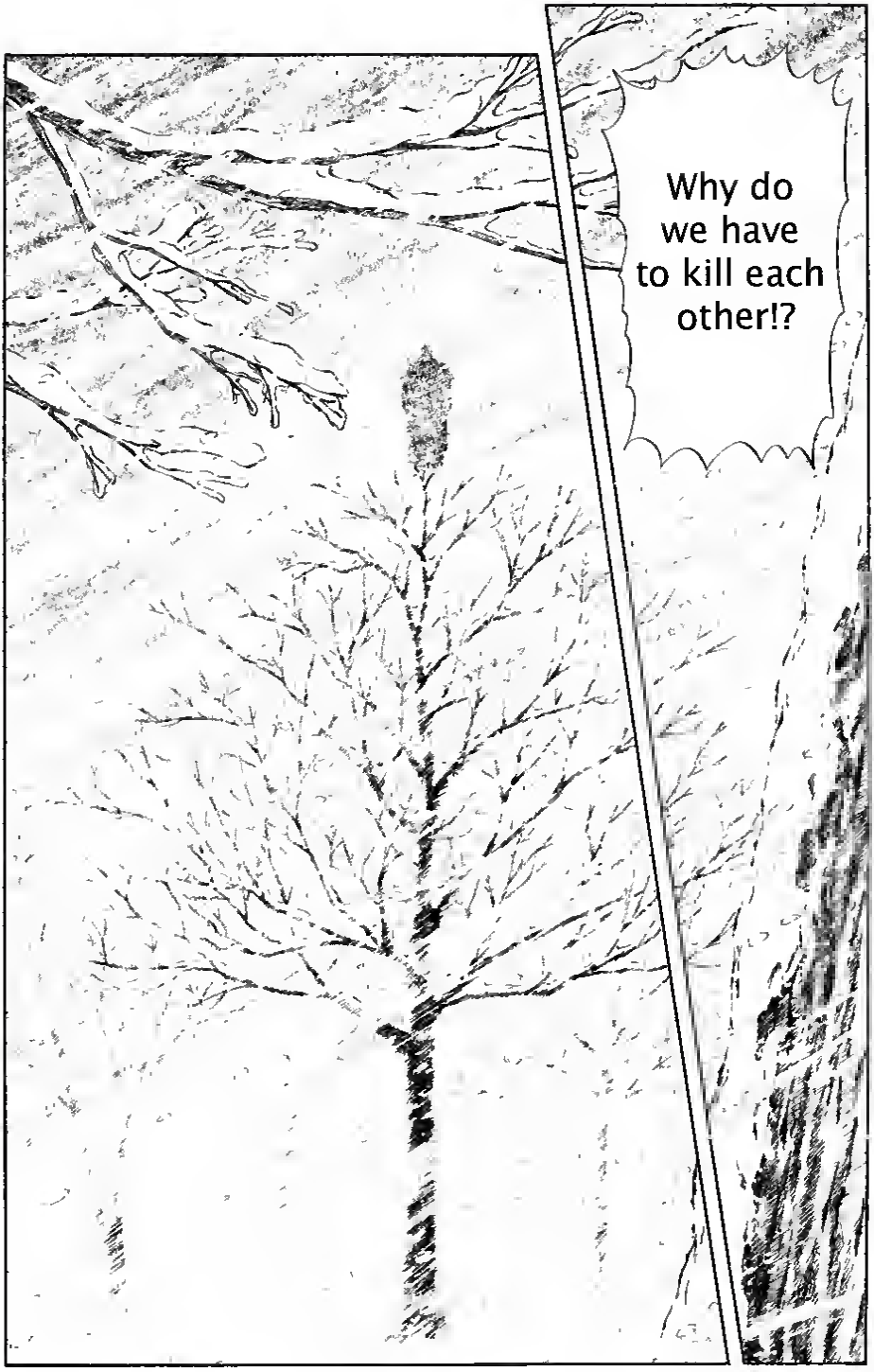
Whatever death we face, we had it coming.
Yeah ...
What an awful feeling ...
Taka... ya... right ...?
Ta... ka... ya...
Ten... pei.
It's... me.


Ten...pei!?
You know this guy ...?
W– we're from... the same tribe...
He was kidnap– ped... by demon gods...

Tenpei!
Tenpei!
...k-
killed...
by you...
I...
I'm...
...glad...
I wa...s...
...it all...
came...
ba...ck...
...you
cut
me...
As...
soon
as...


Th–
those...
days...
Tho...se
days...
Tho...
se...

Why is it like this...!?
I...
Why...
...wanted to... save you guys...
I wanted to protect Toko...


Why do we have to kill each other!?

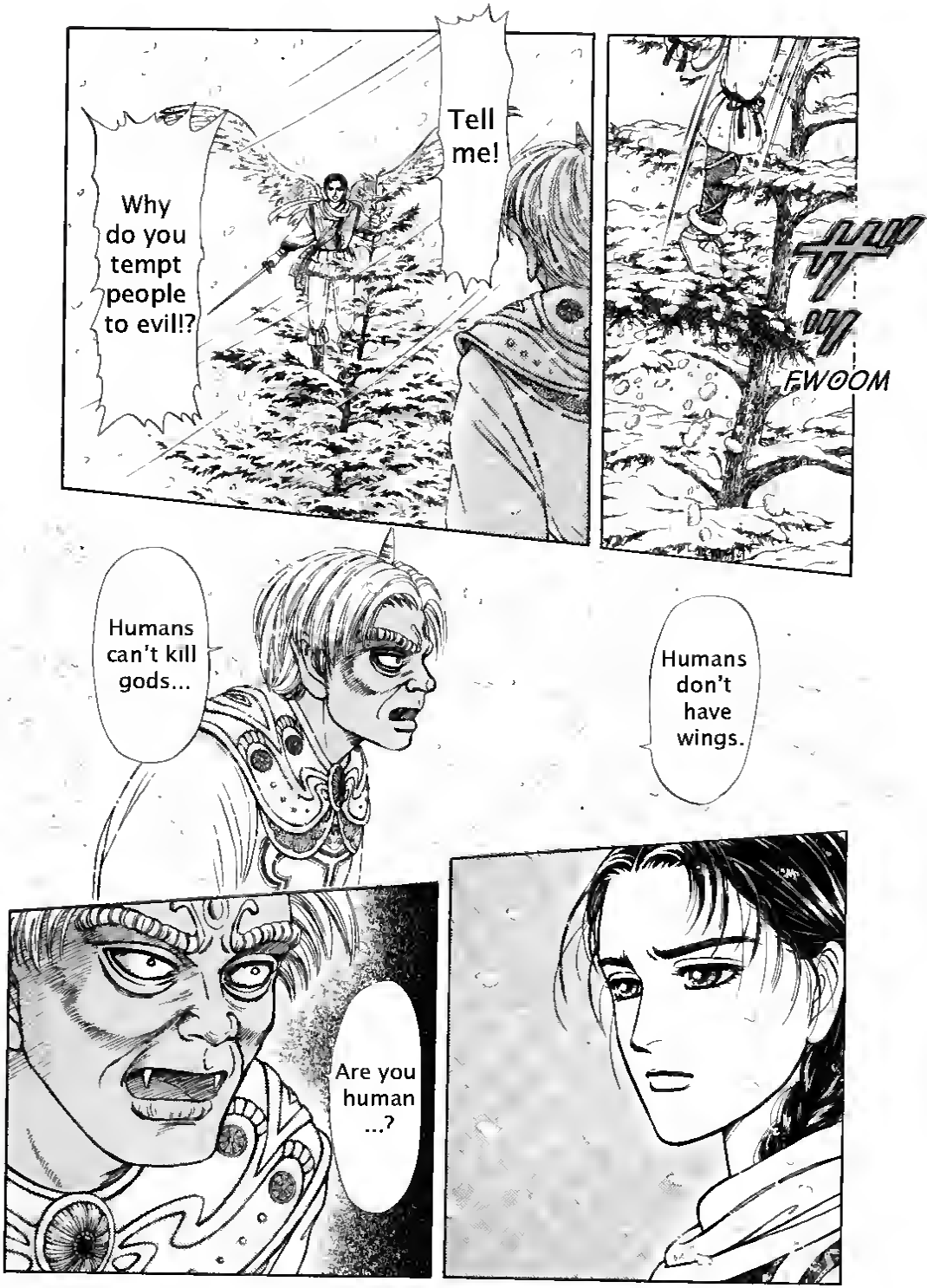
Taka-
ya!

I'll be back to bury Tenpei.
Katsu-ra...
I'll chase him to the ends of the earth.
Taka-ya...
Don't take this too far. Your senses are dulled by emotion right now.
I'm not so soft as to lose my edge to emotion.

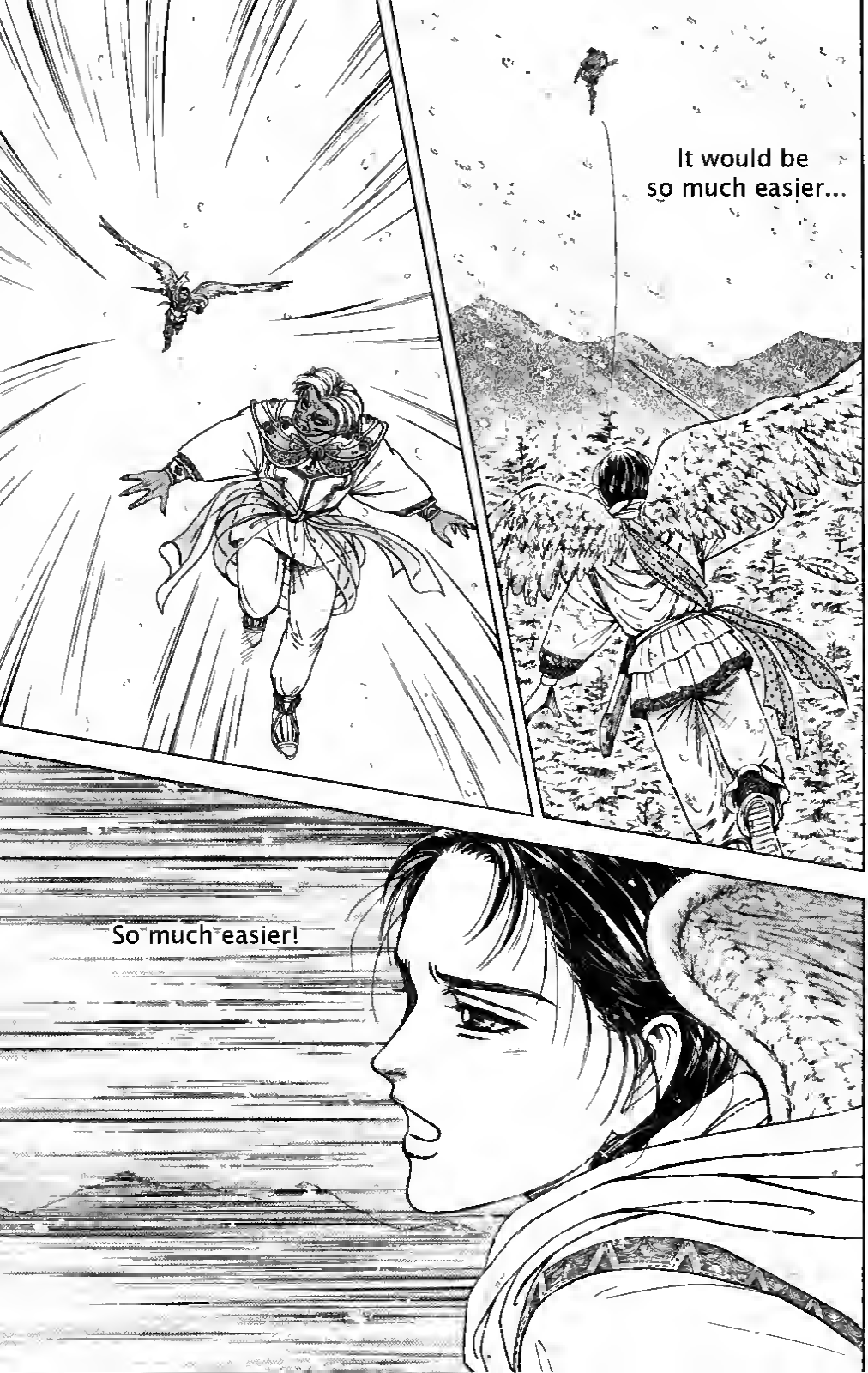
FWISH
I love it when you worry about me, Katsura.
Idiot ...

The reason I keep fighting isn't to kill demon-god warriors!
You think you can get away!?
SHING
It's to destroy demon gods!

SHOO
TWANG


Why do you tempt people to evil!?
Tell me!
FWOOM
Humans can't kill gods...
Humans don't have wings.
Are you human ...?

You are not human ...
Why ...
...are you here?
FWISH


It would be so much easier...
So much easier!

Look at that!
Ohh!
SLASH
FSSH

It would be so much easier...
...not to be human...

...SO...
If I weren't human,
it wouldn't be so...

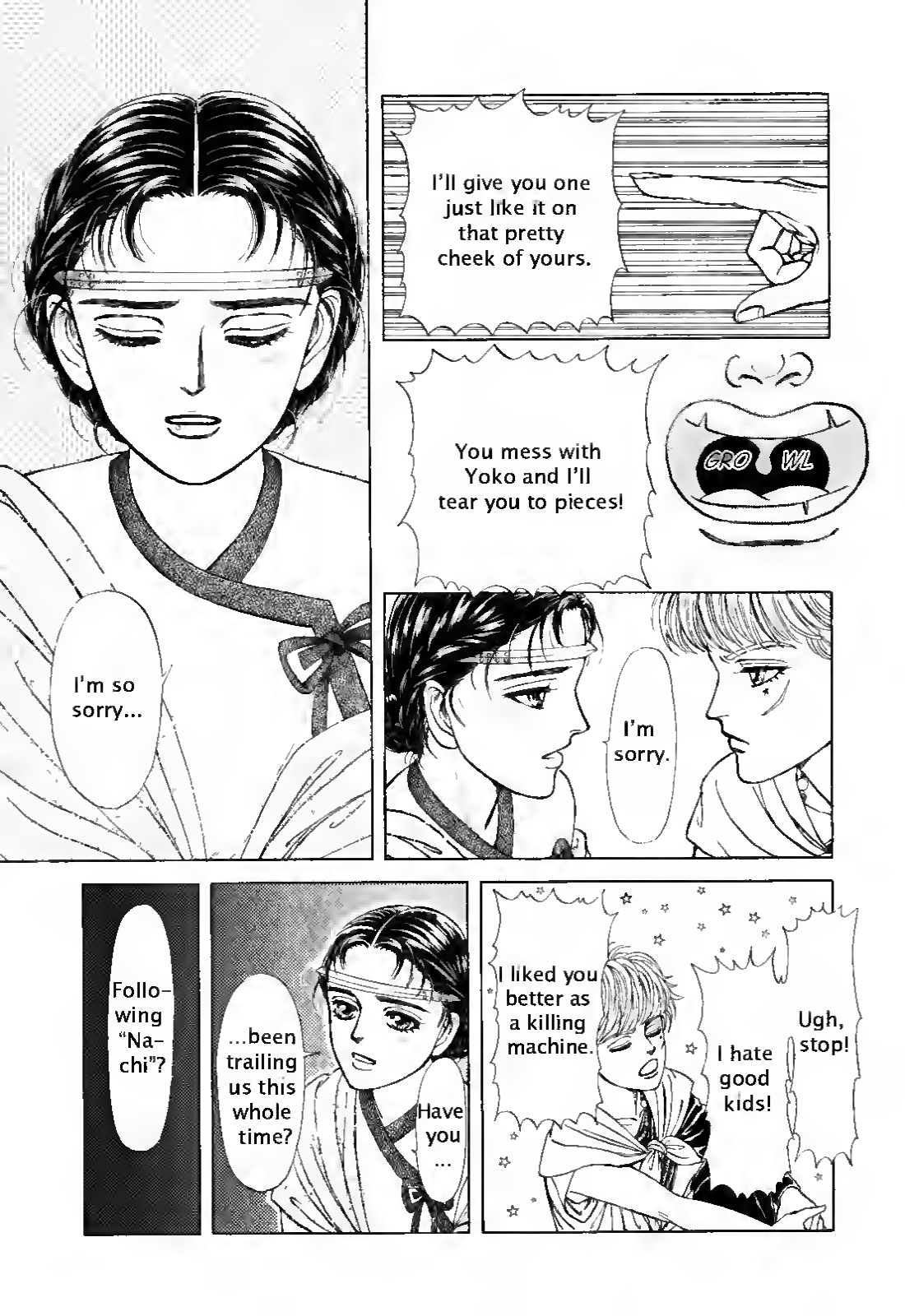
Aohiko! There's some-thing outside ...
Hm... I'll check it out.
I said I'll check it out!
クスッ SNICKER
I don't feel any danger.
No, I'll go.

She's that thief who attacked us.
What do you mean 'nothing' !?
Just a woman who collap-sed.
It's no-thing.
Just leave her there!
She sure is!
She's pretty cute when you get a good look at her.
Yeah? Let me see.

Aohi-ko...
She just fainted from the cold.
She'll come to once she warms up.
Hmph! She's not that cute! Maybe a little.
And she's got this scar on her face.
I'm very picky when it comes to beauty
There's a scar on her face...
D-did I...?
Did I give her that... at that time...?
Mm ...

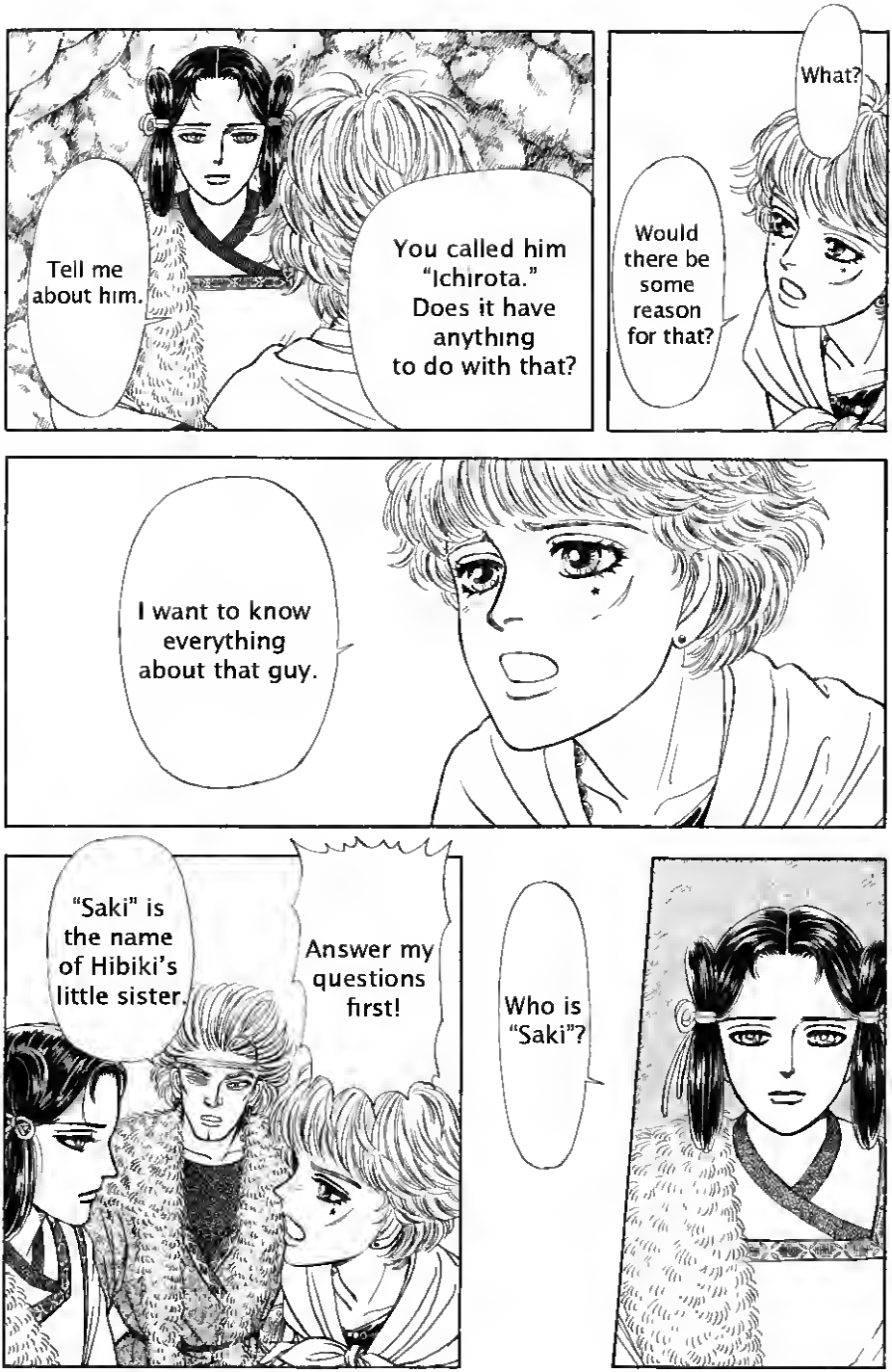
...are you always saving me?
Why...
You don't appear to have any frostbite. Do you feel any pain?
Wow. What a beautiful face.
It's cree-py.
Ahh! What are you doing!?

What are you crying about?
GRRR
SHAKE SHAKE
He looks super freaky up close
D-don't touch Aohiko!
HOWL
おいしい…
Yum...
Whew... This guy is addictive...
BA-DUMP BA-DUMP
ジロッ
GLARE
I got dumped by Nachi thanks to this scar you gave me.
What!?
You!
You ...

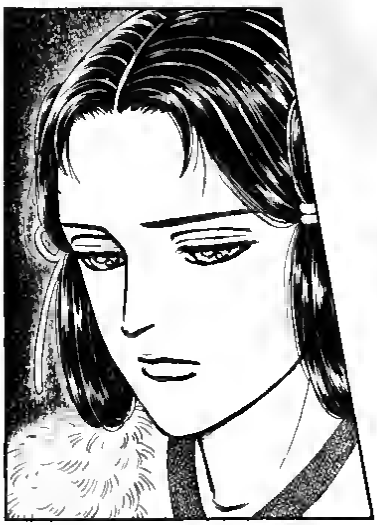

I'm so sorry...
I'll give you one just like it on that pretty cheek of yours.
You mess with Yoko and I'll tear you to pieces!
GRO WL
I'm sorry.
Follo-wing "Na-chi"?
...been trailing us this whole time?
Have you ...
I liked you better as a killing machine.
I hate good kids!
Ugh, stop!

those finger marks on your neck.
So...
Maybe it was hopeless after all.
They're his...
I couldn't get anywhere no matter how hard I pursued him...
Sa...ki?
...and choked me.
But as soon as I said the name "Saki," he flipped out...

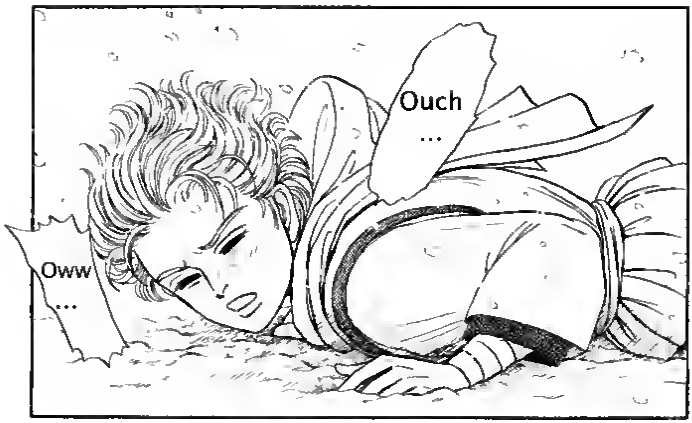
He gently touched this scar...
Just when I thought he might actually kill me, he backed off for some reason.
This scar might have saved my life...
Wait, so...
He looked both angry and sad...
He gently traced it with his fingers... tenderly...
That's right ...!
Gentl ...

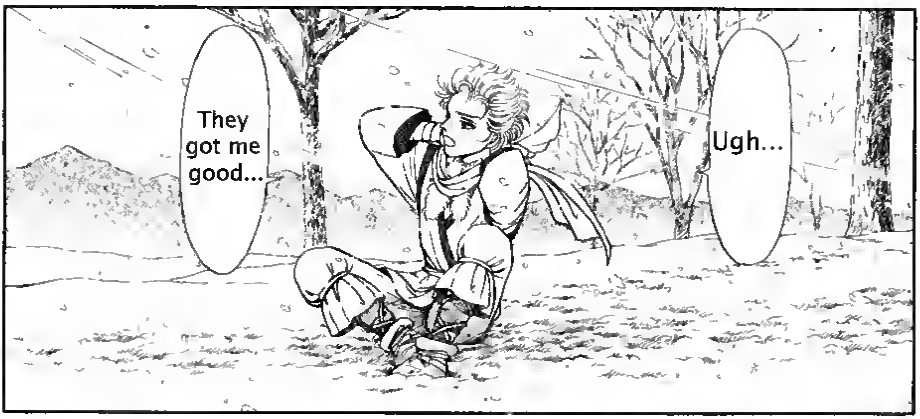

Tell me about him.
You called him "Ichirota." Does it have anything to do with that?
What?
Would there be some reason for that?
I want to know everything about that guy.
"Saki" is the name of Hibiki's little sister.
Answer my questions first!
Who is "Saki"?

I overheard your Captain and Hibiki talking about it!
Hibiki unjustly resents Nachi!
No!
I heard it was Nachi's fault that she died.
How would you know!?
That's not true!
Unjustly resents him...?

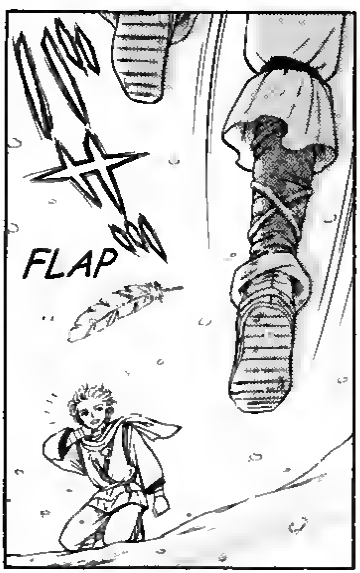


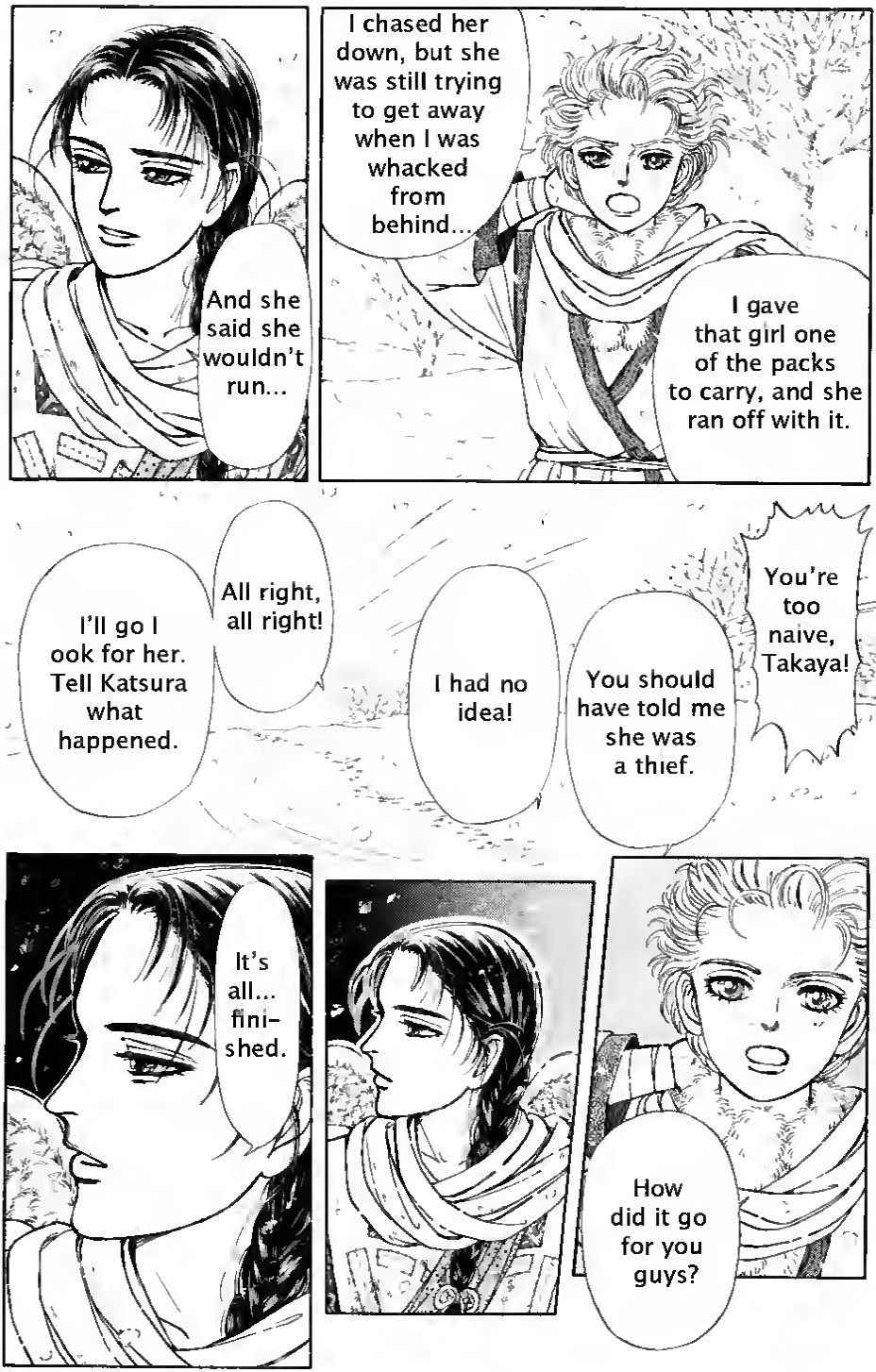
With his fingers...
tenderly...

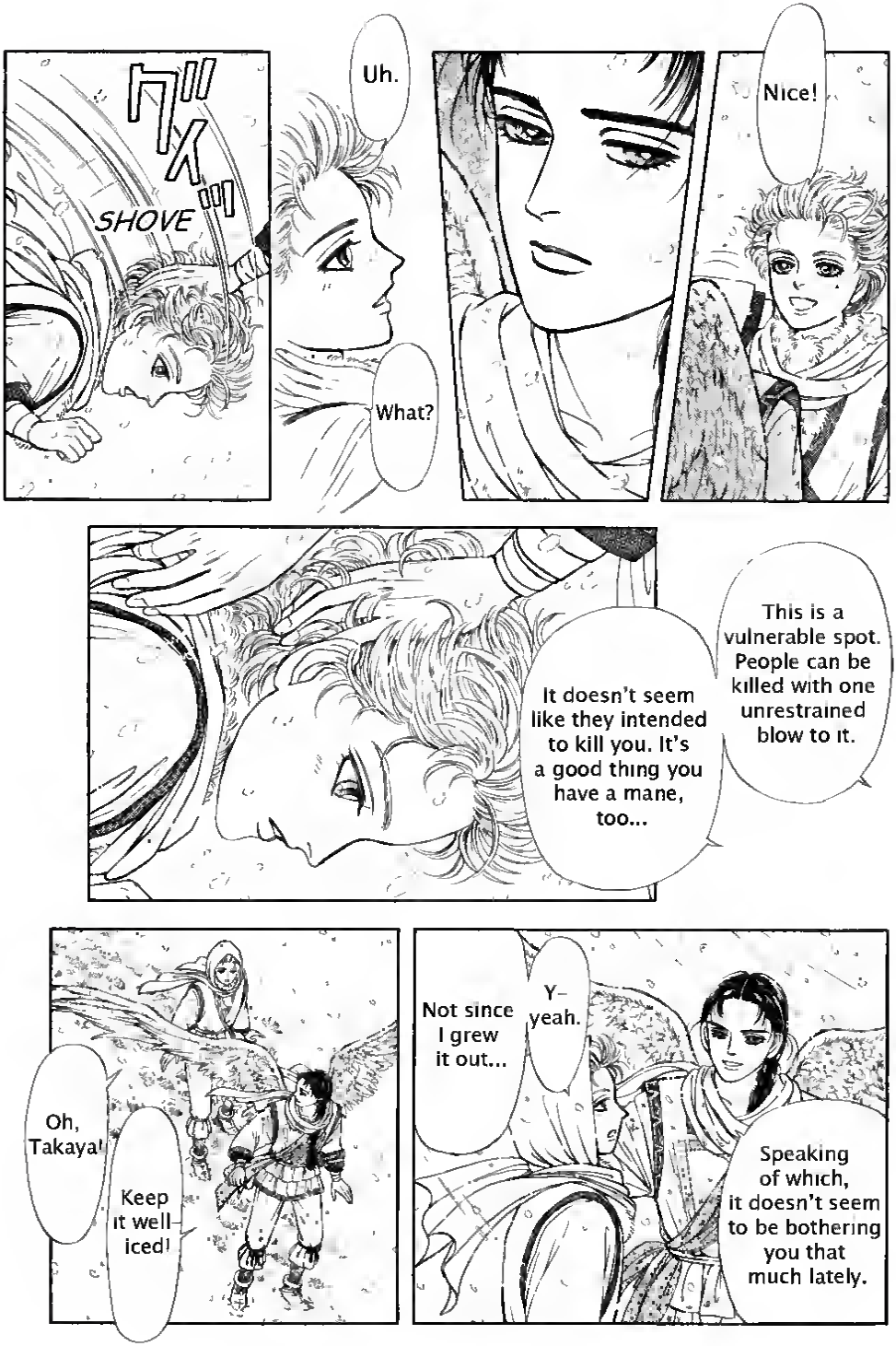

Ouch
...
Oww
...

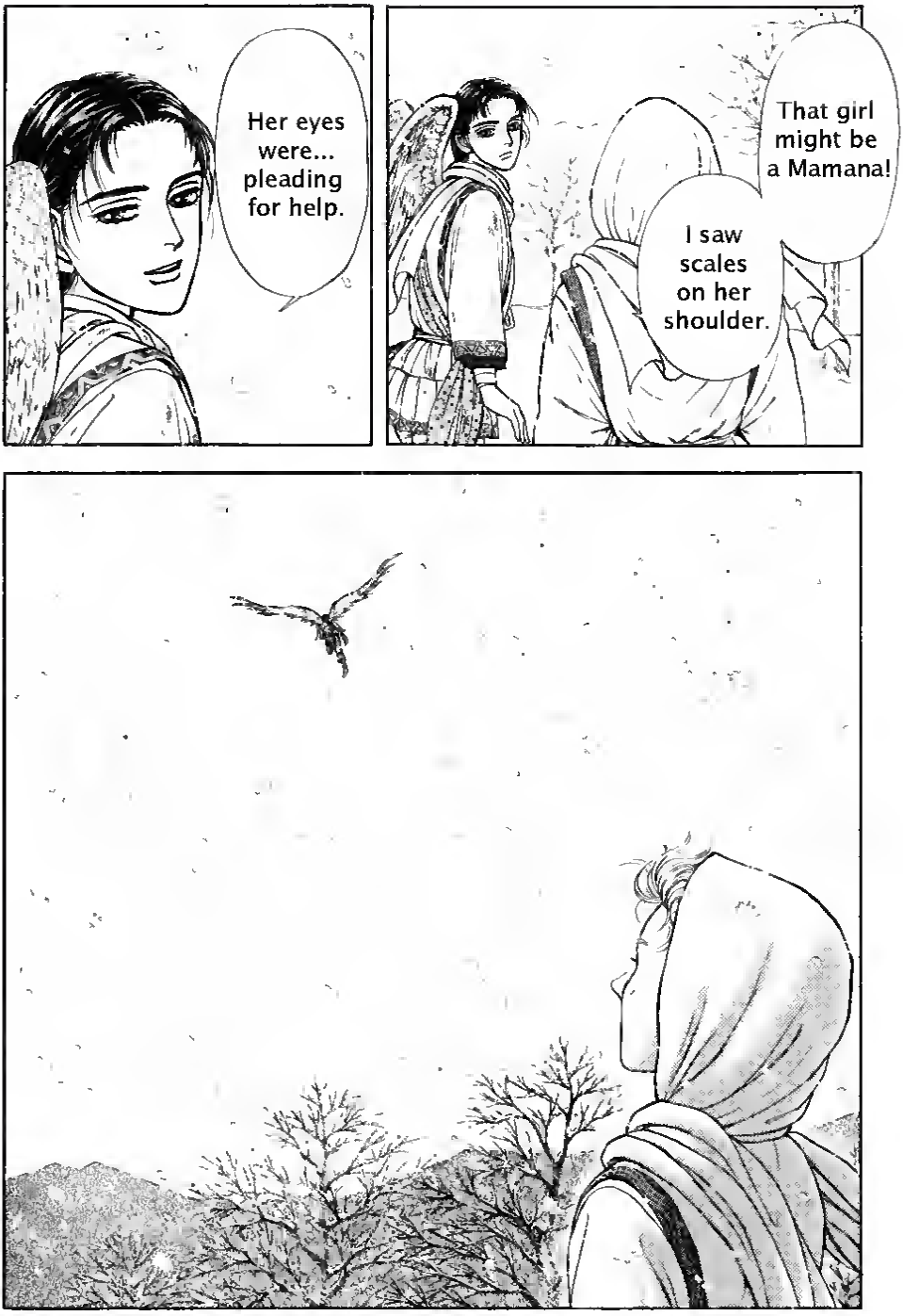

They got me good...
Ugh...

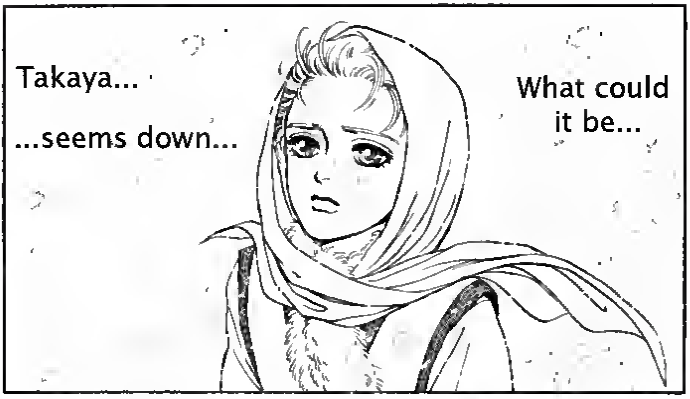
Taka-ya!
What are you doing here!?


FLAP


And she said she wouldn't run...
I chased her down, but she was still trying to get away when I was whacked from behind...
I gave that girl one of the packs to carry, and she ran off with it.
You're too naive, Takaya!
You should have told me she was a thief.
I had no idea!
All right, all right!
I'll go look for her. Tell Katsura what happened.
How did it go for you guys?
It's all... finished.


SHOVE
Uh.
What?
Nice!
It doesn't seem like they intended to kill you. It's a good thing you have a mane, too...
This is a vulnerable spot. People can be killed with one unrestrained blow to it.
Oh, Takaya!
Keep it well-iced!
Not since I grew it out...
Y-yeah.
Speaking of which, it doesn't seem to be bothering you that much lately.

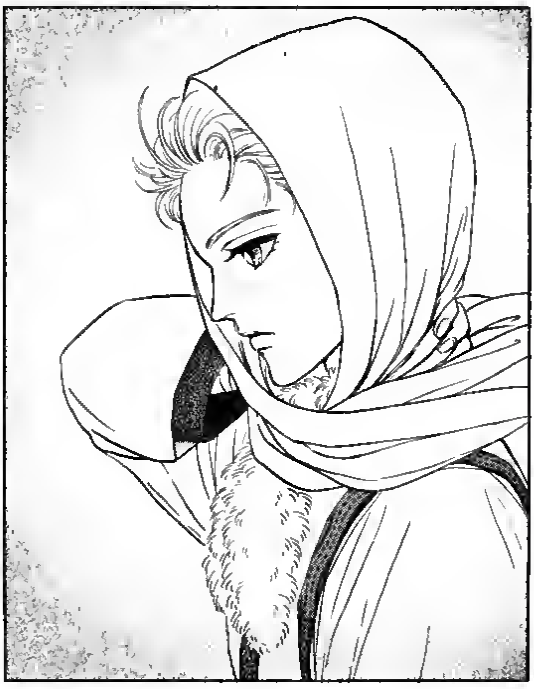

Her eyes were... pleading for help.
That girl might be a Mamana!
I saw scales on her shoulder.

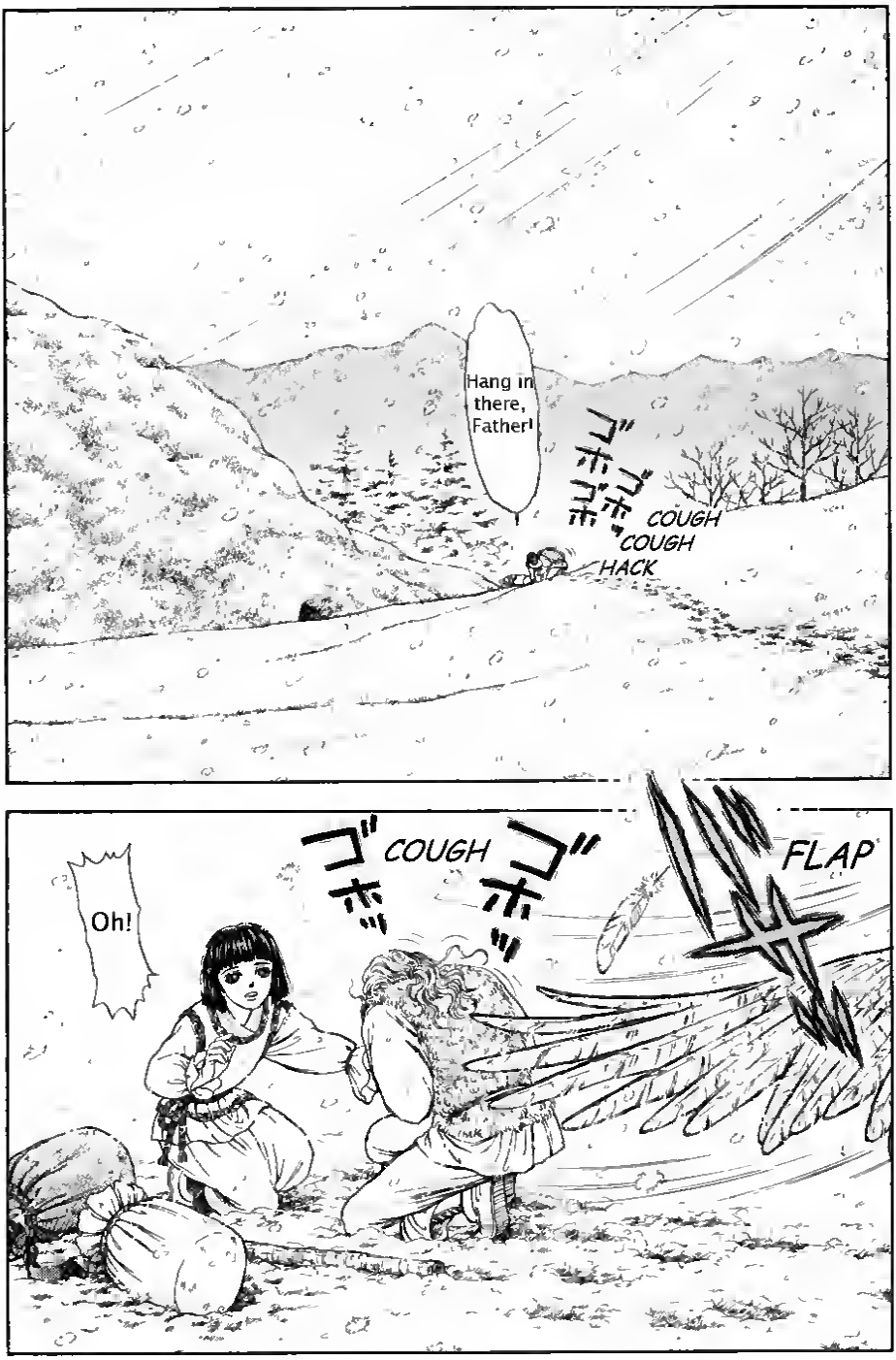


...so... so lonely...

...for some reason...

I'm... so useless...




Hang in there, Father!
ゴボゴボ
COUGH
COUGH
HACK
Oh!
ゴボ COUGH ゴボ
FLAP

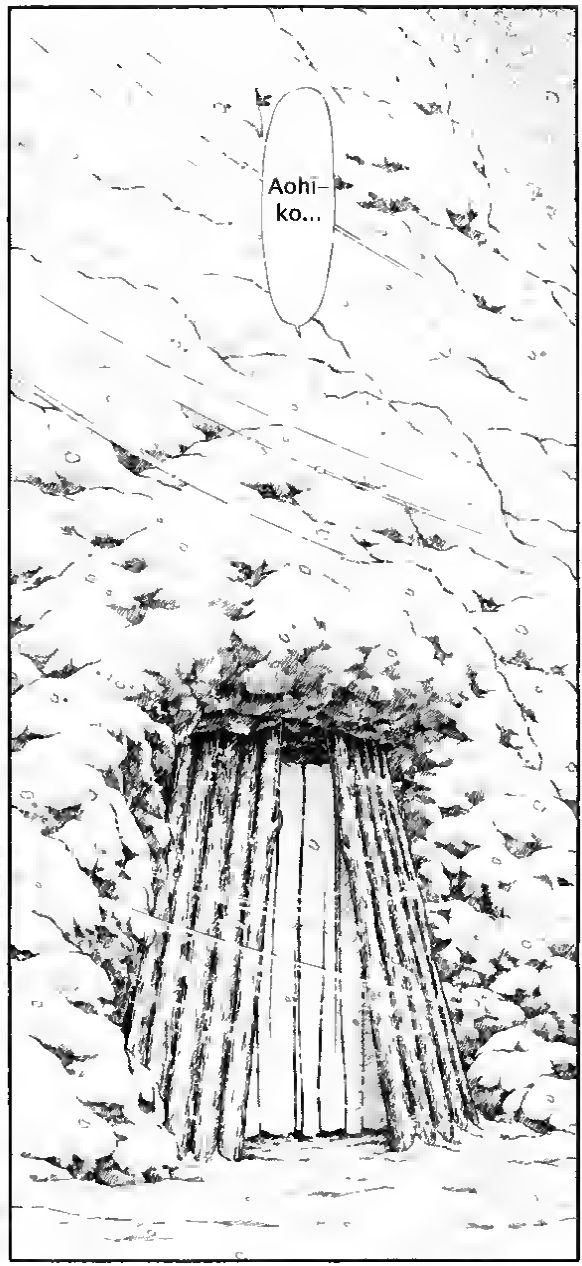
COUGH
Have you fallen ill?
COUGH
COUGH
COUGH
COUGH
Fa-ther ...
That's Takaya... the person I was telling you about.

Just quietly recover your breath.
You don't have to speak.
COUGH
ゴホッ
ゴホッ
ゴホッ
COUGH
COUGH
Uh ...
ゴホッ
COUGH
I... I figured if I took your pack, you'd come looking for it...
I couldn't leave my father behind.
I'm sorry. I promised I wouldn't run...
Let's head toward the village ...
What a... marv... elous...
ゴホッ
COUGH
I could... n't... believe... it...
A Mamana ... with wings...

It doesn't seem very welcoming to outsiders...
...but they won't turn away someone who's ill.
I can't go to the village...
I've been stealing food from them...
And if they found out we were Mamana...
What's bad about being Mamana?
We're human too!
They won't see it that way.
We're no diffe-rent!

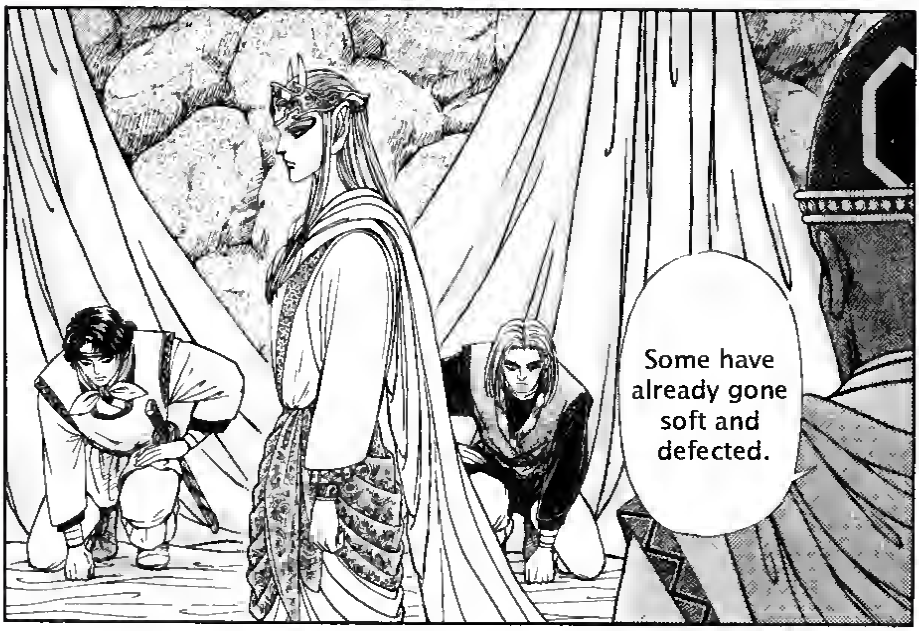
COUGH
COUGH
COUGH
Th-that's because you're strong.
I haven't changed inside.
I'm still the same person as I was before growing these wings.
You won't survive spending the night in a cave without fire.
I followed you here because I wanted to help.
We're very grate-ful...
COUGH
HACK
... a long time... since we've heard such kind words ...
It's been ...

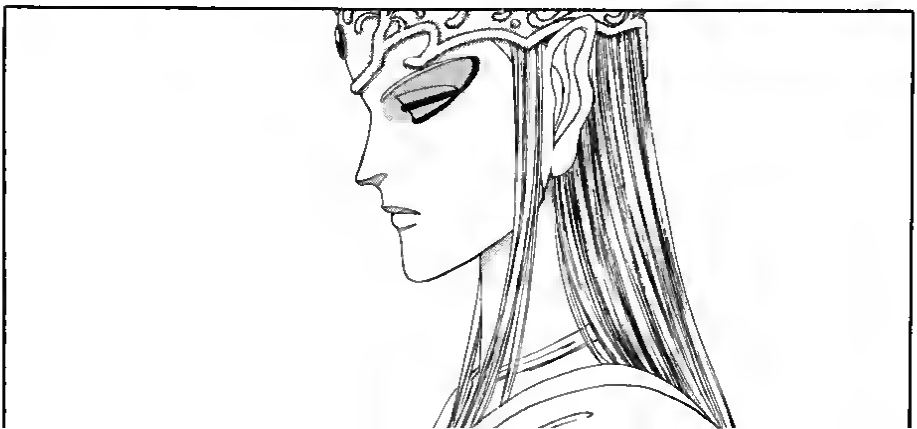
...is clearly a dange-rous man.


Aohi-ko...

He can easily neutralize the evil energy we have drawn out of the warriors for so long.

Once people are healed from an illness or injury by that man, they abandon any hostility they felt toward him.

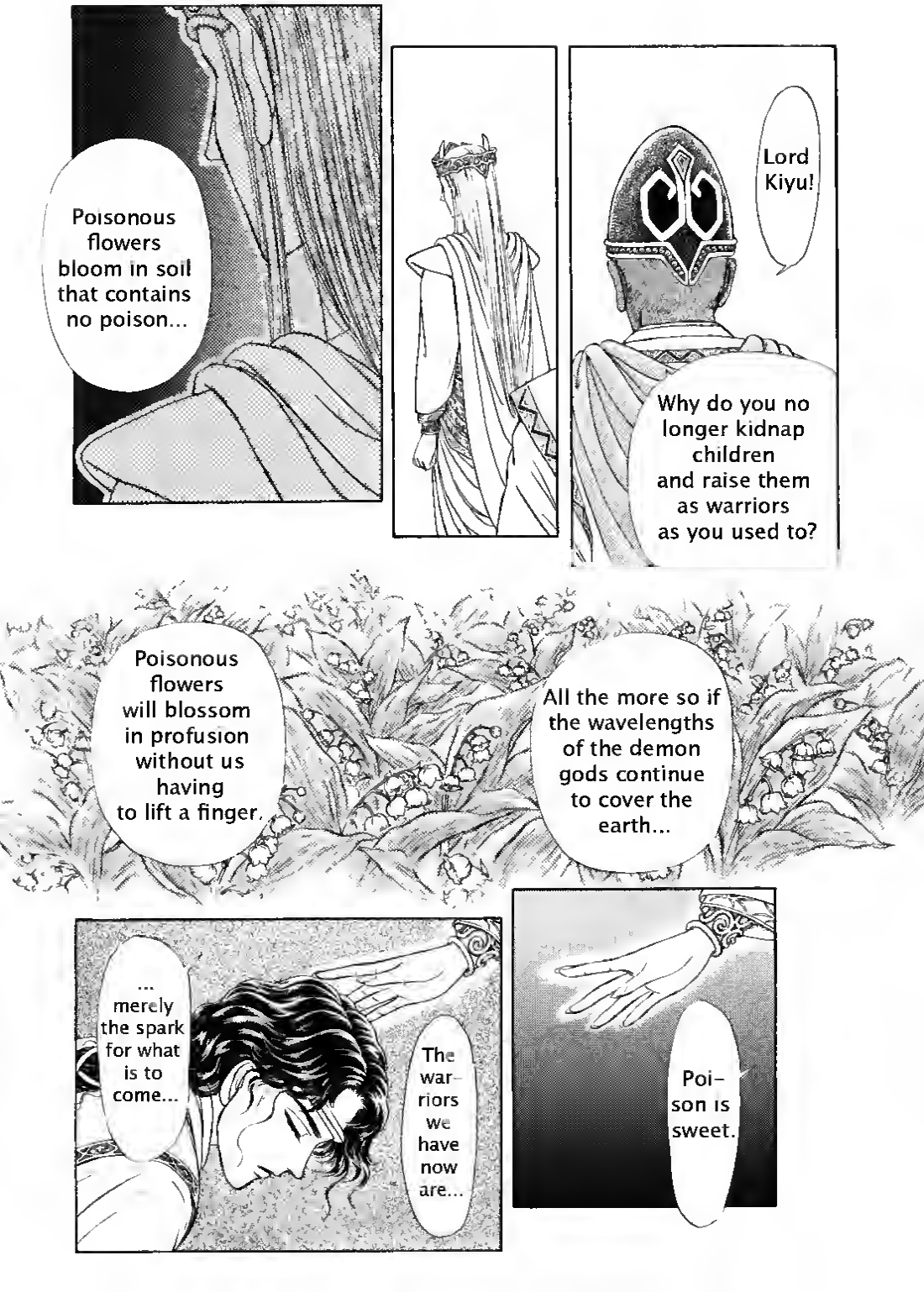




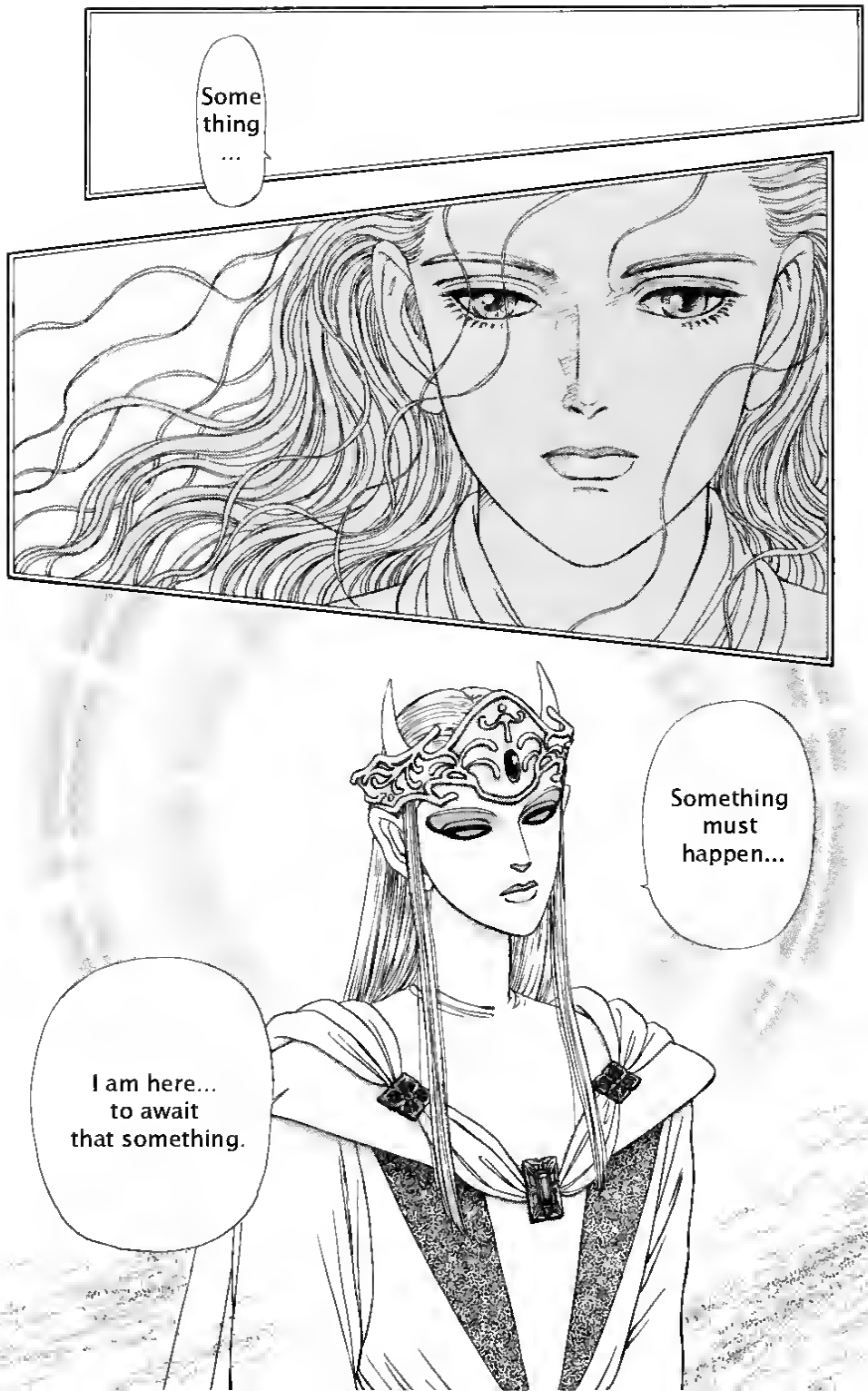
The other day...
...I heard Yoko's laughter for the first time...
Yoko is the truly dangerous one.
It is as bright as spring sunshine...
Aohiko is a catalyst...

The more dangerous she becomes...
...the more she fascinates me...
B-but... Lord Kiyu, do you have no intention of parting with Yoko, no matter how dangerous she may be!?
At this rate, we'll lose even more warriors before we reach Fuji.
Put Aohiko to death at the very least!
Then, Aohiko ...!
...what must be, must be...
In the end...
HEHE...

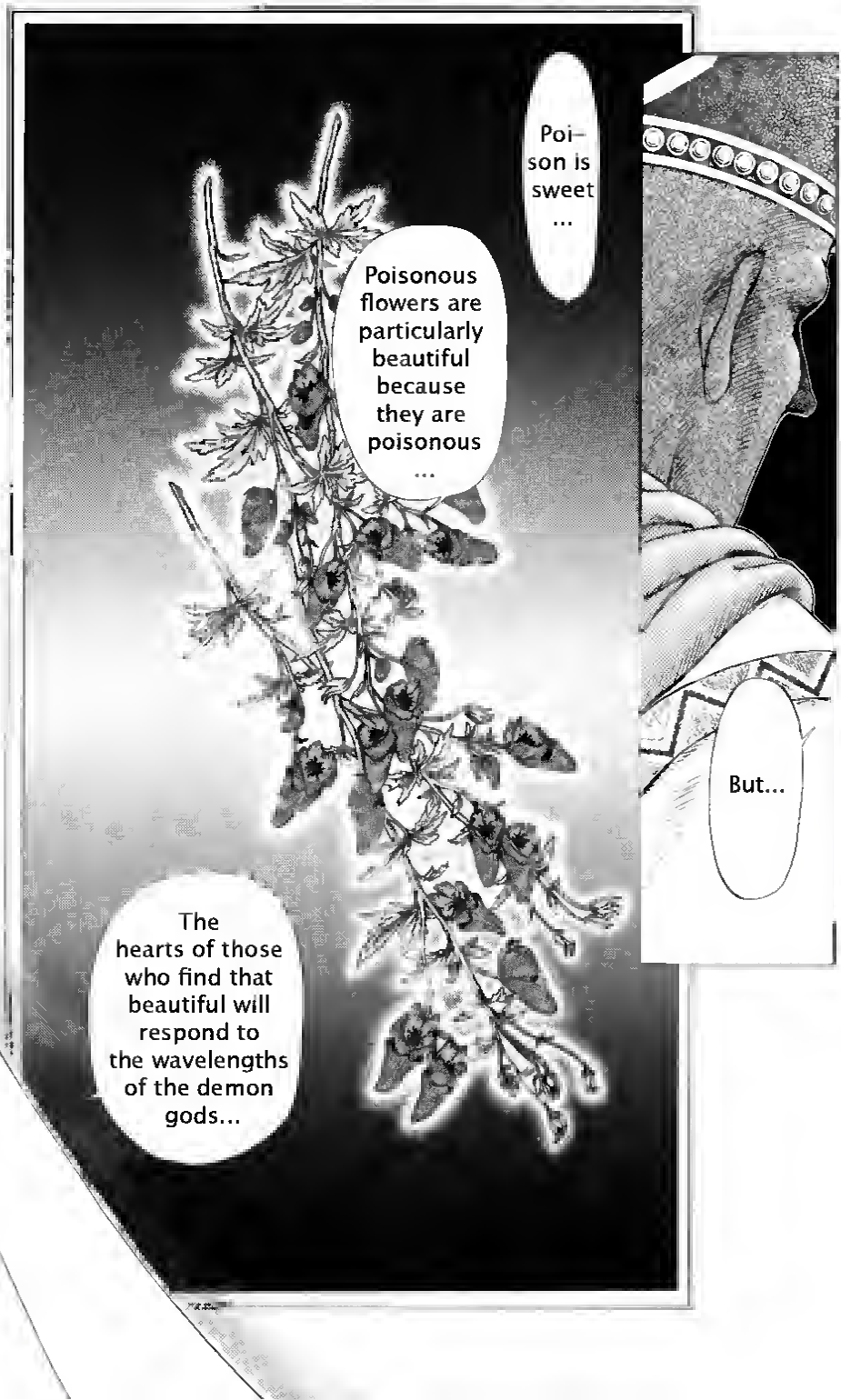
Yes, My Lord...
That's your favorite saying, isn't it?
Getsu-sho...
...but now not even a quarter of that number remains.
Until a short while ago, we had more than a hundred warriors...
You should also advise Lord Kiyu!
That's not what I meant!
I think Nachi has the fighting power of a hundred men...
How can he serve as a model for the other demon gods, let alone the demigods, in this state!
Lord Kiyu is the foremost of the demon gods and must wield the kind of power worthy of that rank!


Poisonous flowers bloom in soil that contains no poison...
Lord Kiyu!
Why do you no longer kidnap children and raise them as warriors as you used to?
Poisonous flowers will blossom in profusion without us having to lift a finger.
All the more so if the wavelengths of the demon gods continue to cover the earth...
... merely the spark for what is to come...
The warriors we have now are...
Poi-son is sweet.

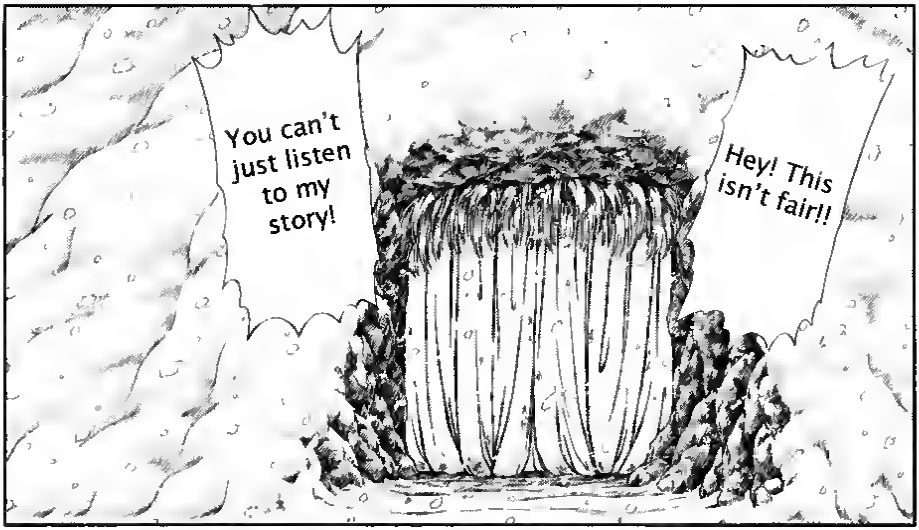
I don't understand. Wouldn't it be best to have as much spark as possible?
I feel very uneasy about our manpower in the event of something unexpected.
"Some-thing"?
Some-thing...
I- I don't know what, but...

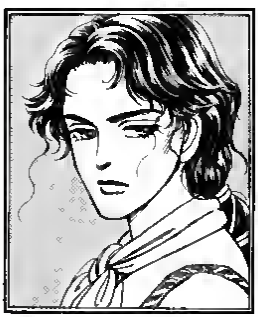

Some thing ...
Something must happen...
I am here... to await that something.

Getsu-sho!
I don't like that smug look on your face!
Lord Kiyu?
I've simply devoted my life to Lord Kiyu...
No... I have no idea...
It seems as though you fully understood Lord Kiyu's cryptic words just now!
But...
Lord Kiyu, it is surely not my intention to oppose you...
Why are you turning on Getsusho?


Poi-
son is
sweet
...
Poisonous flowers are particularly beautiful because they are poisonous ...
But...
The hearts of those who find that beautiful will respond to the wavelengths of the demon gods...

You...
...me
...
That...
people
...
They're
to be
pitied...





...hated Nachi... or Ichirota... not once...

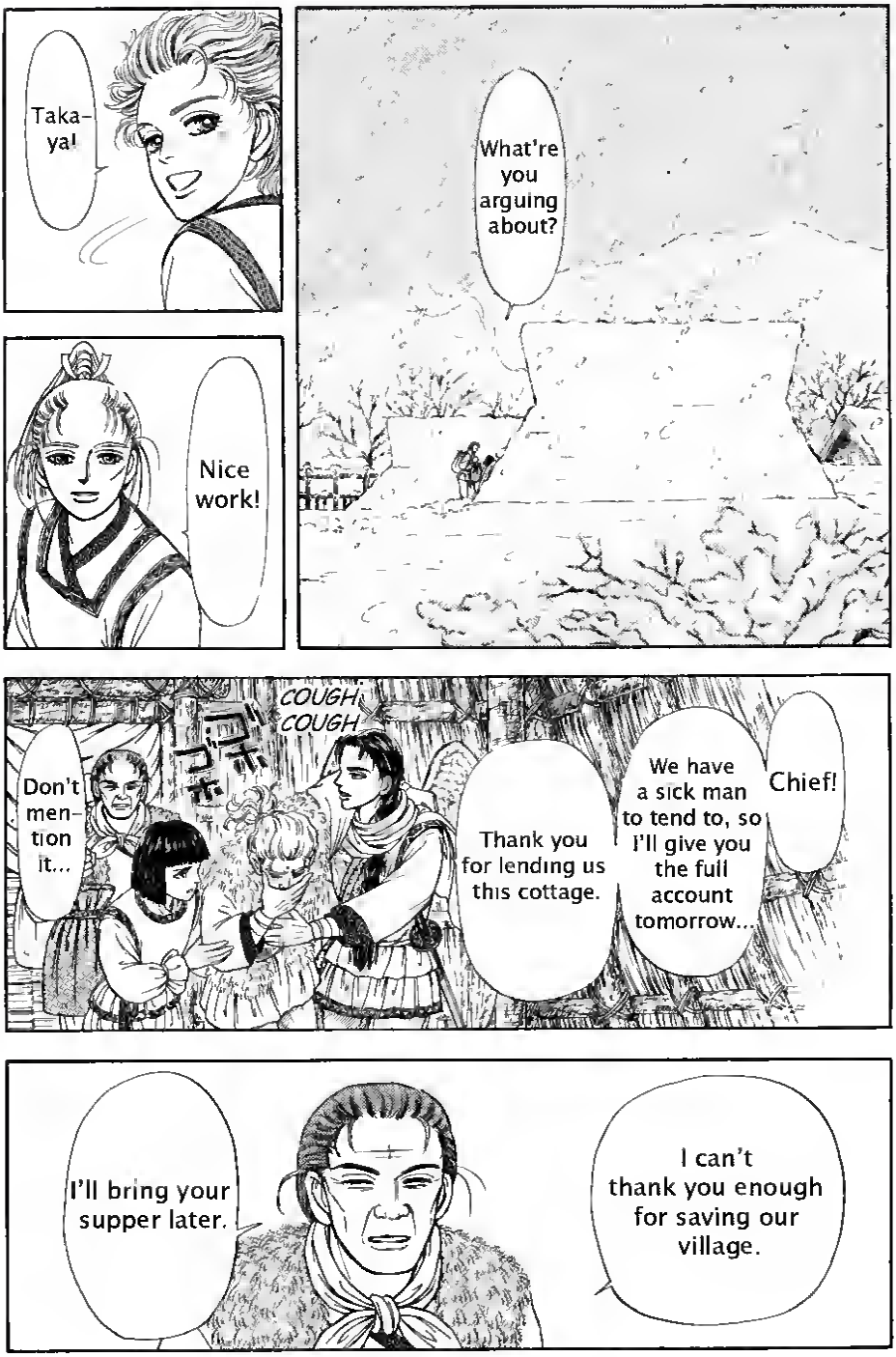
I... never...

Same goes for Hibiki ...
Stop yelling or I'll strangle you!
Hey!
It's not... fair.

There's a woman with...
...the same kind of scar on her cheek.
A woman Ichirota loves so much that it's painful...
...for him to be near her...
I've ...
...got pretty good intuition...
So this woman...
... she's ...

...that kind of thing?
... she's ...
She's what kind of thing!?
You nitwit!
Some-body else?
She's in love with somebody else!

'Cause ...!
The hea-viest one!?
So you made the girl carry Takaya's pack!?
What a rotten guy! Giving the heaviest pack to a girl...
'Cause I was carrying your pack too, Katsura!
If you keep twisting all the way around, you'll straighten yourself out a bit!
That's right! Twist things around!
Who cares. I'm useless anyway.


Taka-ya!
What're you arguing about?
Nice work!
COUGH COUGH
ゴホ ゴホ
Don't mention it...
Thank you for lending us this cottage.
We have a sick man to tend to, so I'll give you the full account tomorrow...
Chief!
I'll bring your supper later.
I can't thank you enough for saving our village.

He's obedient with Takaya...
Sure!
Kai! Prepare a bed.
Hopefully his fever will go down.
I'm not sure.
Is it a cold that got worse?
サッ
GRIP
You're Mamana, right?

What's your name?
I'm Katsura. I'm not Mamana, though...
He's got a mane on his back.
This guy's Mamana too.
Look at the way he's ogling her...
What a pretty name
My father's name...
...is Hakuji, and mine is Tamia.
Are you traveling with your father?
At this time of year?

...tell you...
...
It's okay... Tell us when you feel like it.
Stea-ling is wrong.
Just apologize to the villagers tomorrow.
I'll...

They've started bursting open!
POP
POP
...
Stand back. They're gonna hit your face.
Oh bro-ther.
My chest goes nuts over chest-nuts!
AHAHAHA
POP POP POP
POP
Can we join you?
HEHEHE
GASP

Who invited you!?
What !?
You let that strange woman join you.
What do you mean "strange" !?
Sure!
Okay!
Let's all eat toge-ther!
H-huh ...
Works like a charm.
Put chestnut leaf extract on it.
What happe-ned to your hand?
It's a rash I got from poison sumac.

Look! Those chestnuts are roasting.
Hot- hot- hot- hot!
Don't wolf them down!
They're so sweet!

Lord Mida.
Hibiki!
Uh...
Kill Aohiko.

You must want to kill him.
You failed to kill him once.
You want to kill him, don't you?
Some-thing you cannot do.
GASP...
He has brought upon that change in Yoko.
I-I...
If you kill that man, Yoko will go back to the way she once was...
Kill him!
Some-thing you will never be able to do.

The way she once was...
H-hey...
ACK...
Hibi-ki?

Hibiki!
Hibiki! Stop!
Aohiko, run!
I'll borrow this sword!
SHING

I'm not letting you off this time!
Hibiki, you bastard!
Hibiki!
Hibiki!
Hibiki!

He's being manipulated!
Hibiki ...
Fight me!
Hibiki! Over here!
Toko! I smell a demon god nearby ...
HAAH!
Me too!

I'll divert Hibiki's attention from Aohiko while we're fighting!
CLANG
CLASH
He's targeting Aohiko!
Kyoji! Take Aohiko to Lord Kiyu!
Where are you going!? Aohiko!
GASP
This looks bad! Let's tell the Captain!
Wait, you!
Oh! Hey!

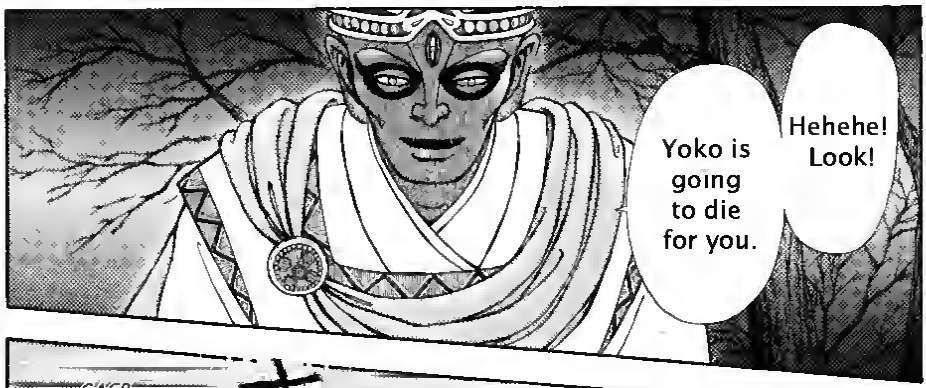
CLANG
CLANG
CLANG
But, at this rate, we'll both get wounded...
...and end up killing each other!
CLANG
Aohi-ko!
...do it with your own hands!
If you want to kill me...

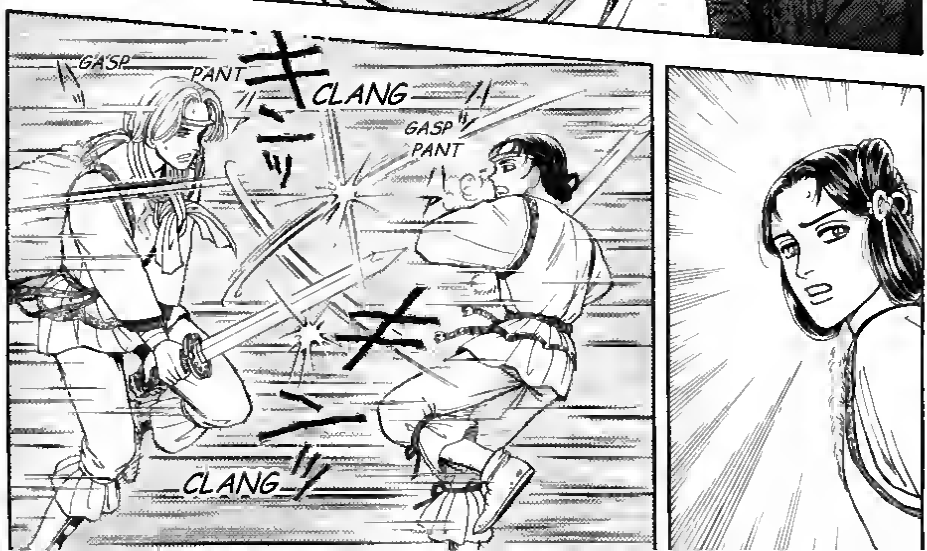
Stay out of this!
Uhh!
Kyoji!

I just put him to sleep ...
Is that what gods do? Manipulate people!?
CLANG
CLANG
SWISH SWISH
SWISH SWISH
CLASH
Over here, Hibiki!
Why would you use a human to kill someone like me!?

I just gave him a push in that direction.
Hibiki wanted to kill you.
We don't need you.

They're none of your business!
Love, hatred, even ambi-valence are all human things.
We don't need demigods or demon gods...

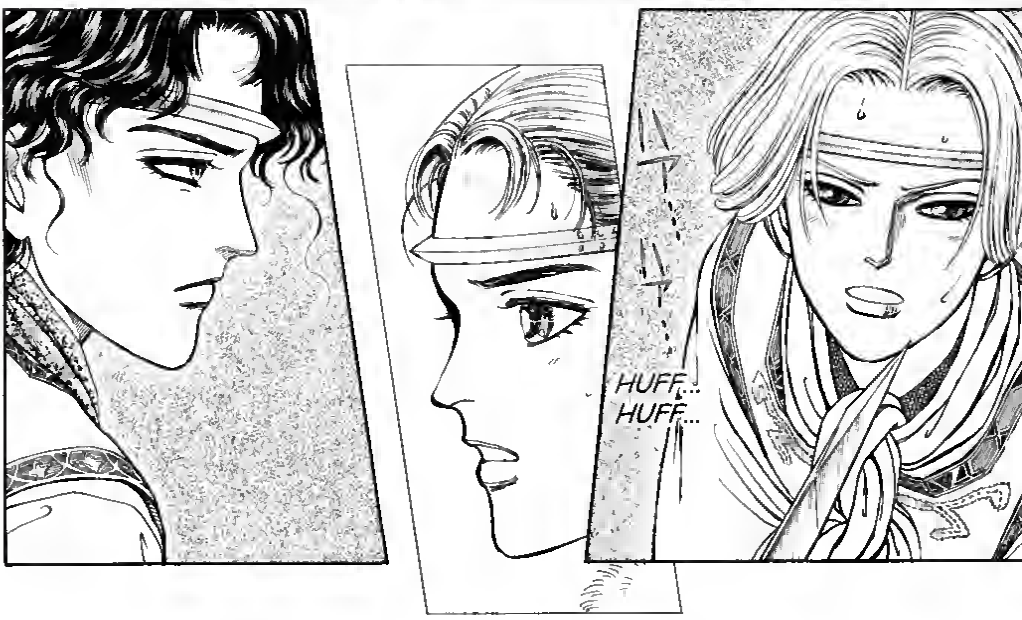

Yoko is going to die for you.
Hehehe! Look!


GASP
PANT
CLANG
GASP
PANT
CLANG

That's enough! Stop!
Toko!
CLANG
PANT
PANT
CLANG
Lord Kiyu! You perceive this, don't you!?
Hey!
Uh ...
Lord Kiyu!

WHAM
Ah ...
SHOOM
CLANG
PANT
PANT PANT
PANT
PANT PANT
PANT
Over here!
I'm over here!
Hibiki!

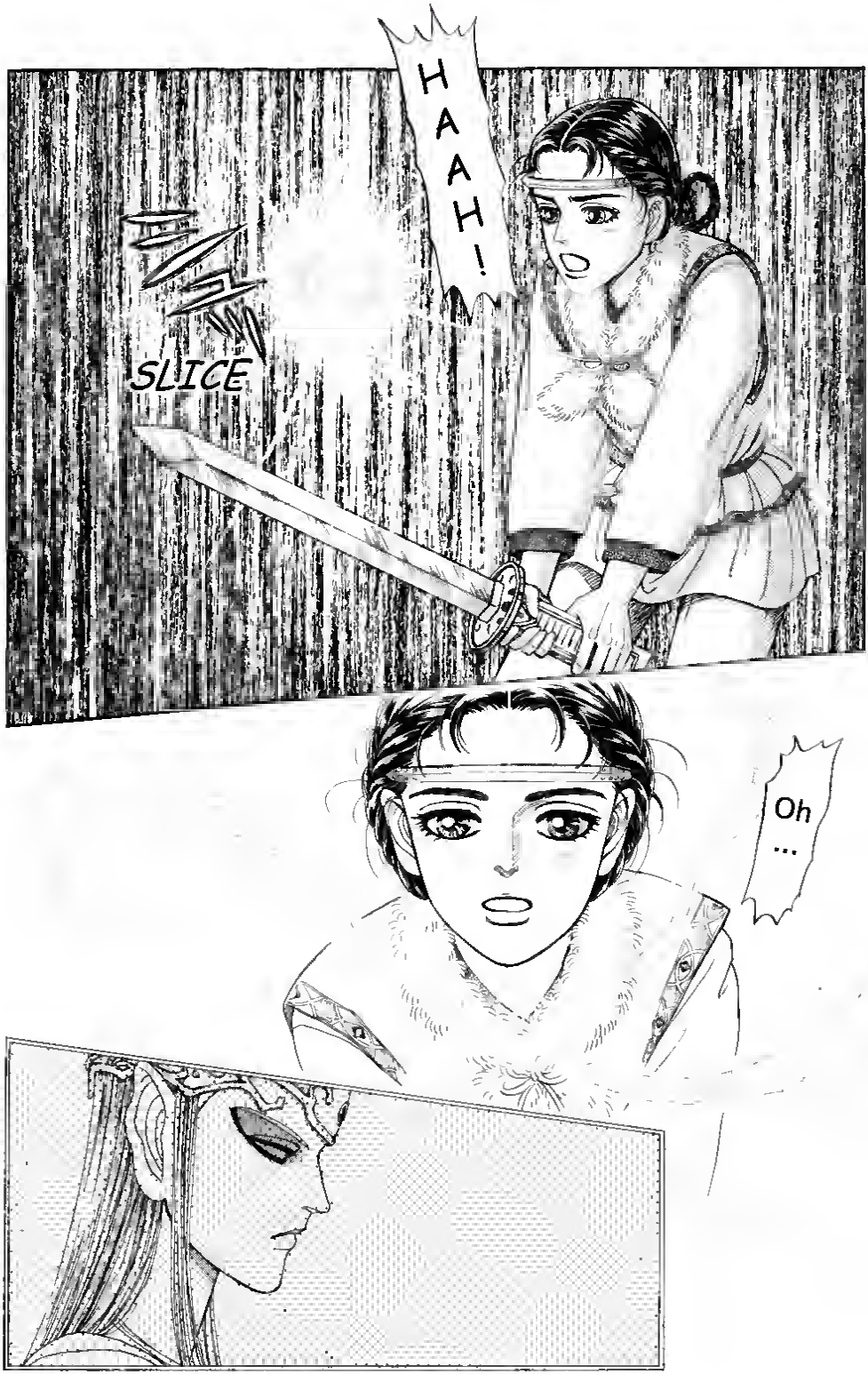
Stop, Aohiko!
DASH

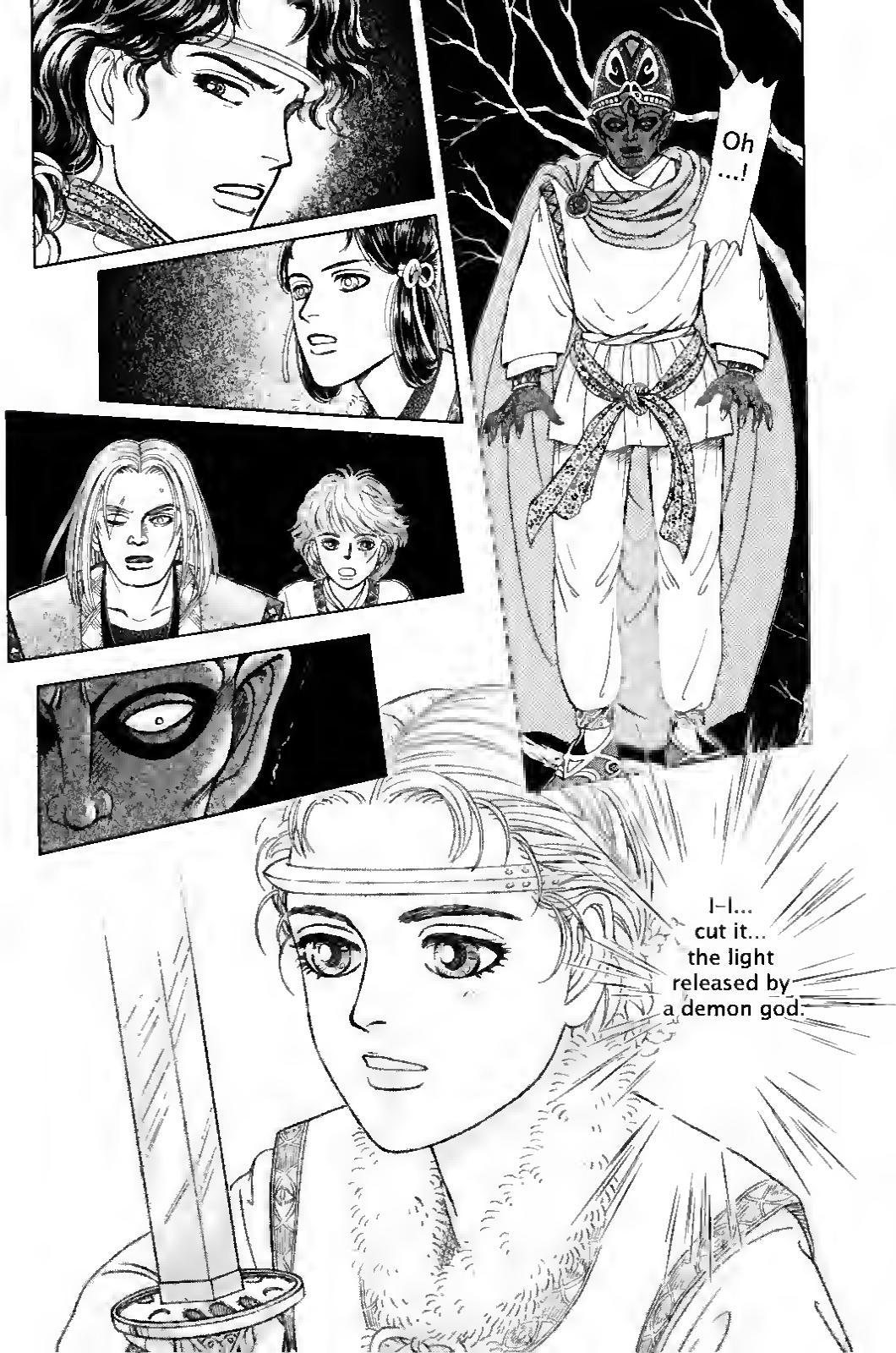

HUFF...
HUFF...

J... just in time ...
PANT PANT
I won't let you end your life so easily...
...not until I crush your soul...
...not until I pin your soul to the ground and crush it to pieces with these hands.

Nachi ...
Aohiko is your enemy.
Stop!
Stop this already!
CLANG
CLANG
CLANG
GASP

DASH
KK-KRR
KRR
KRR


HAAH!
SLICE
Oh
...


Oh ...!
I-I... cut it... the light released by a demon god.

I did it too!
Takaya!
Kill her!
Kill Yoko!
Hibiki!
STAGGER...

TWANG
SWF
SWISH
GASP

GRIP
Aohi-
ko!

Look at Hibiki's eyes...
Ugh, that's gotta hurt...
If you pull out your sword, he'll pick up the broken one and go on a killing spree.
He's not in his right mind...
I won't let you kill this man...

GRIP
URGH
Stop! Ichirota!
...

SWISH
What a convenient hand...
Treat Hibiki's wound and restrain him.
He'll open his eyes soon and try to attack.
Y-yes sir.
What an awful wound ...
Sorry ...

That man, however, may not be able to use his fingers.
Nachi ...
The sword went in between the ribs but not that deeply.
I'll heal Aohiko's wound... Wait and see!
I'll heal them!
Lord Mida...
Did Lord Kiyu order you to do this?

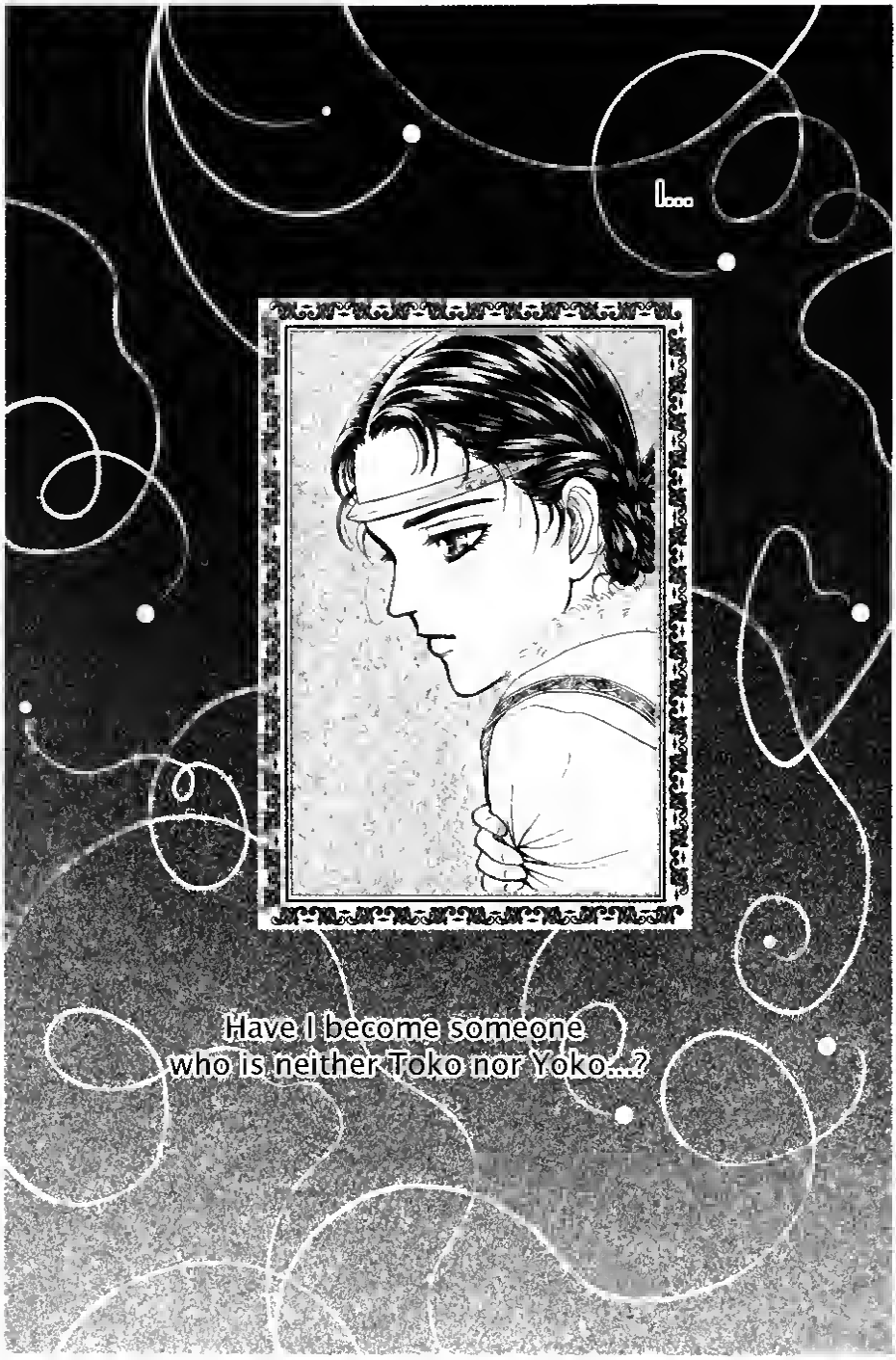
But he must have perceived it...
No...

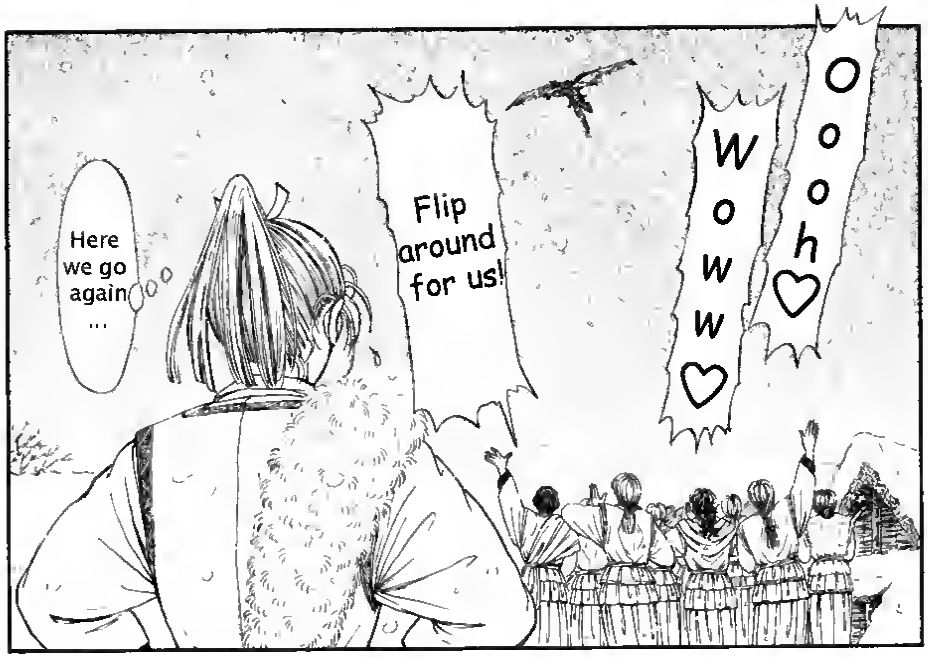
His silent observation implies his approval.

You won't get away with it this time.
Yoko ...
I don't care how much Lord Kiyu favors you.

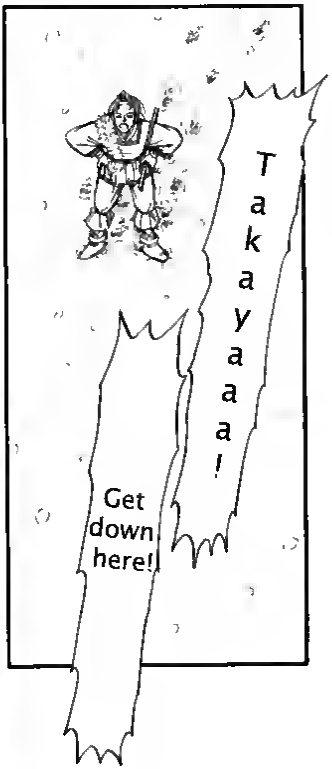
To think you hid that skill from us...
No ...!
I...

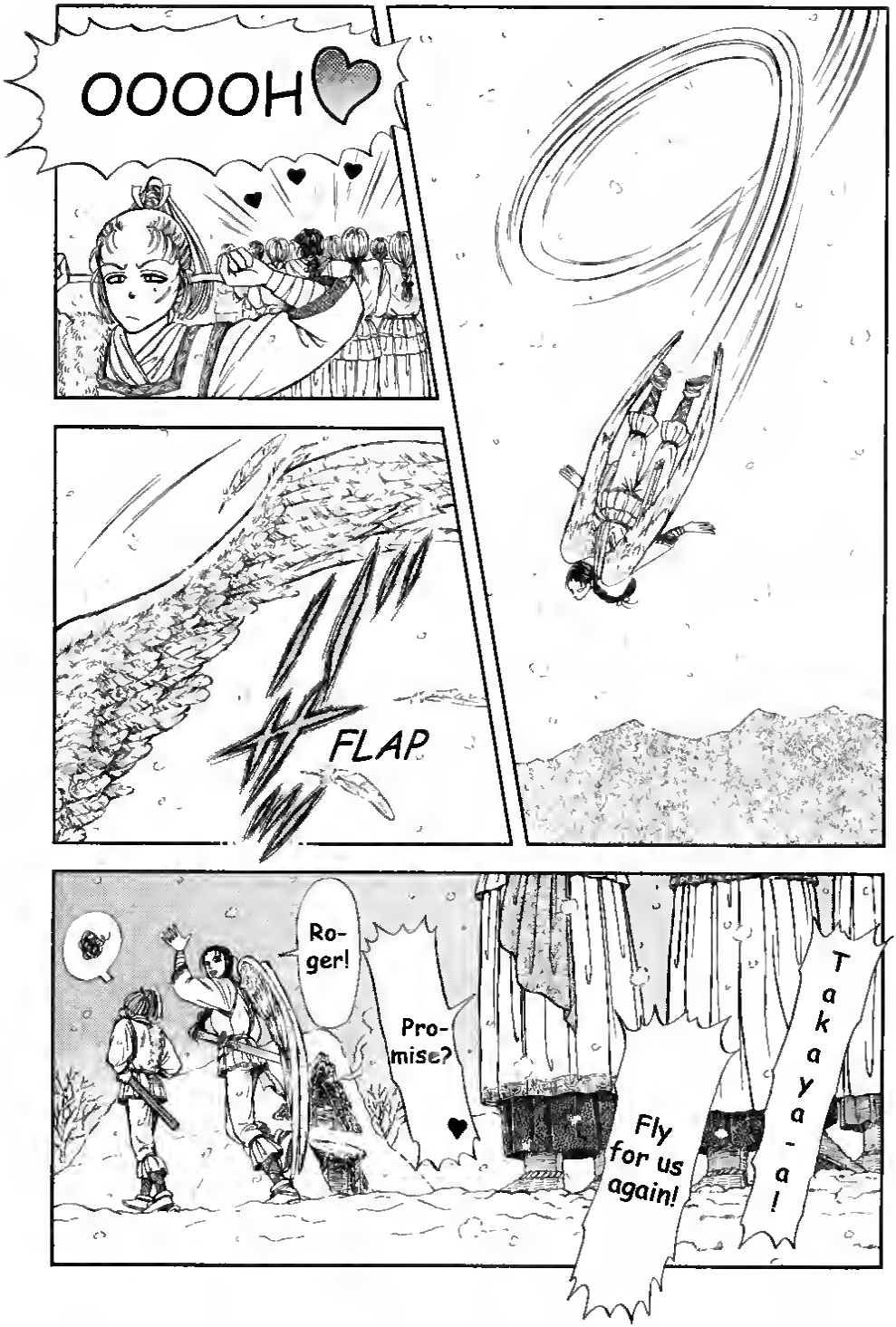
I...


I...
Have I become someone
who is neither Toko nor Yoko...?


Here we go again ...
Flip around for us!
Wowww
Oooh

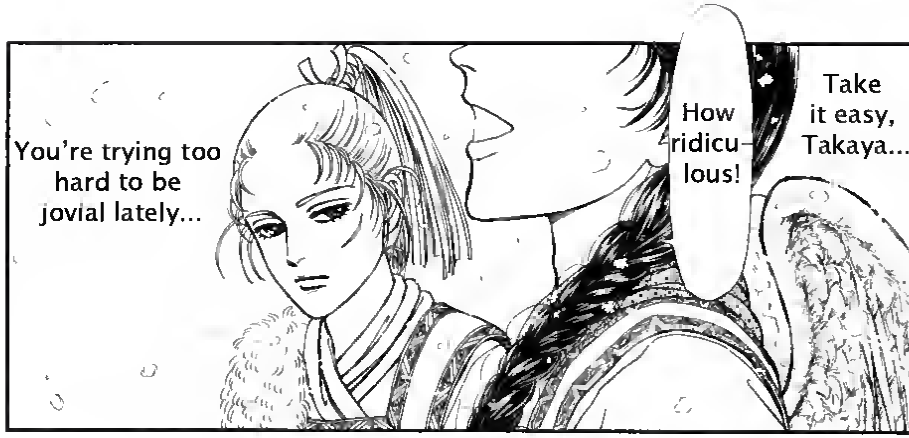
Hakuji says he wants to speak with you!

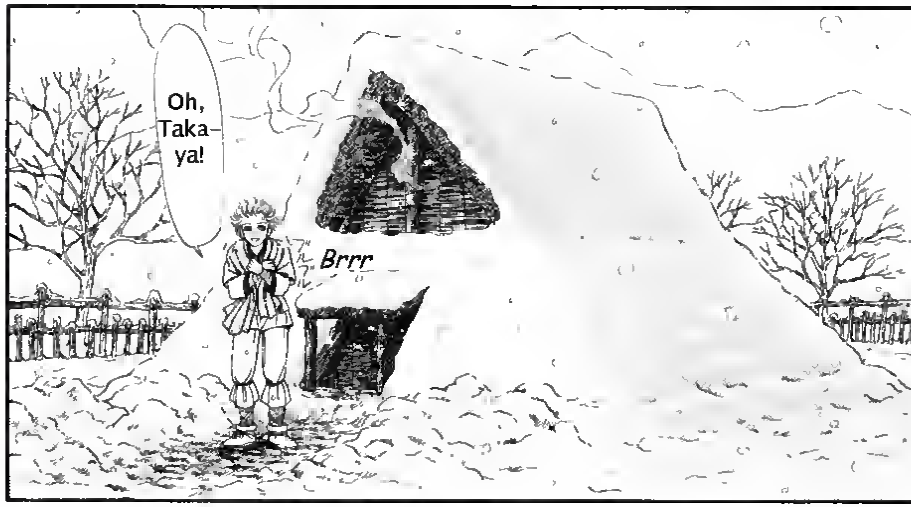

Takayaaa!
Get down here!


OOOOH
FLAP
Ro-
ger!
Pro-
mise?
Fly
for us
again!
Takaya-a!

What are you buttering them up for!? You're starting to drool...
He's soo cool!
He said "ro-ger"!
Oooh!
You're lucky to have survived this long with that kind of naive thinking.
If we're going to stay here the entire winter, it'll be more cozy if they like us, right!?
I-I'm not doing it because I want to.
If you're popular with the ladies you're gonna be unpopular with the guys...
Oh, come on!
H-hey ...!
Told you so...
GLARE
Uh...

So vast...
So white ...
...but I get scol-ded by Katsura!
The sky is so vast ...
Sheesh!
...but I get scolded by Katsura!
The snow is so white ...


You're trying too hard to be jovial lately...
How ridiculous!
Take it easy, Takaya...


Oh, Takaya!
Brrr

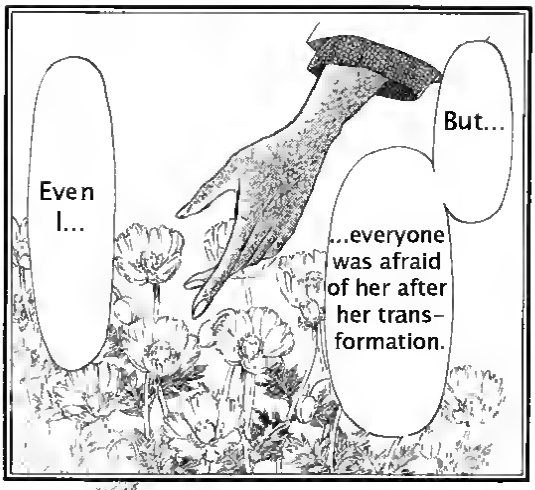
I offered to go, but he insisted on sending his daughter.
Said they were in the cave...
Tamia's father sent her to fetch their things.

I'll tell you about it later.
I wanna hear the old man's story too.
Go run after her and help her carry their things.
Hm ...
Sounds like a story he doesn't want Tamia to hear.
I will!
You'd better!
Then sit near the fire...
No... I'm fine...
There's no need to get up...
Stay there...

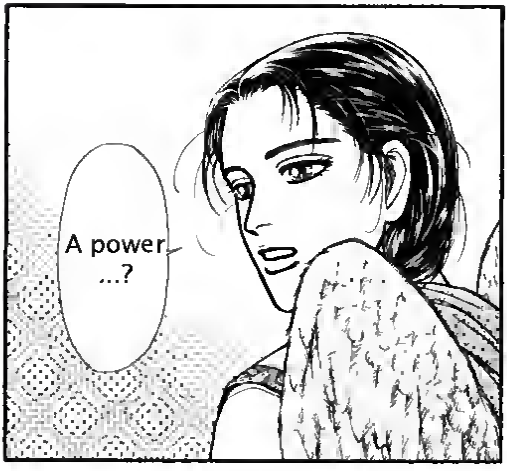
I can't help but think that my dead wife guided you to us...
How fortunate to have met people like you on our journey when we were prepared to die...
What did she say about it?
Tamia told us that her late mother had Mamana blood...
It seems you've endured extraordinary hardships on your journey...
That you took to the road after her mother became ill and was driven out of the village because she was contagious...

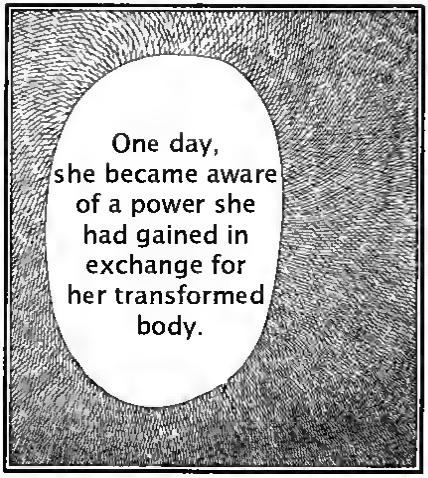
The skin on Tamia's shoulders is becoming scaly...
...
My wife...
The scales spread over her entire body.
A kind woman ...
She was a beautiful woman ...

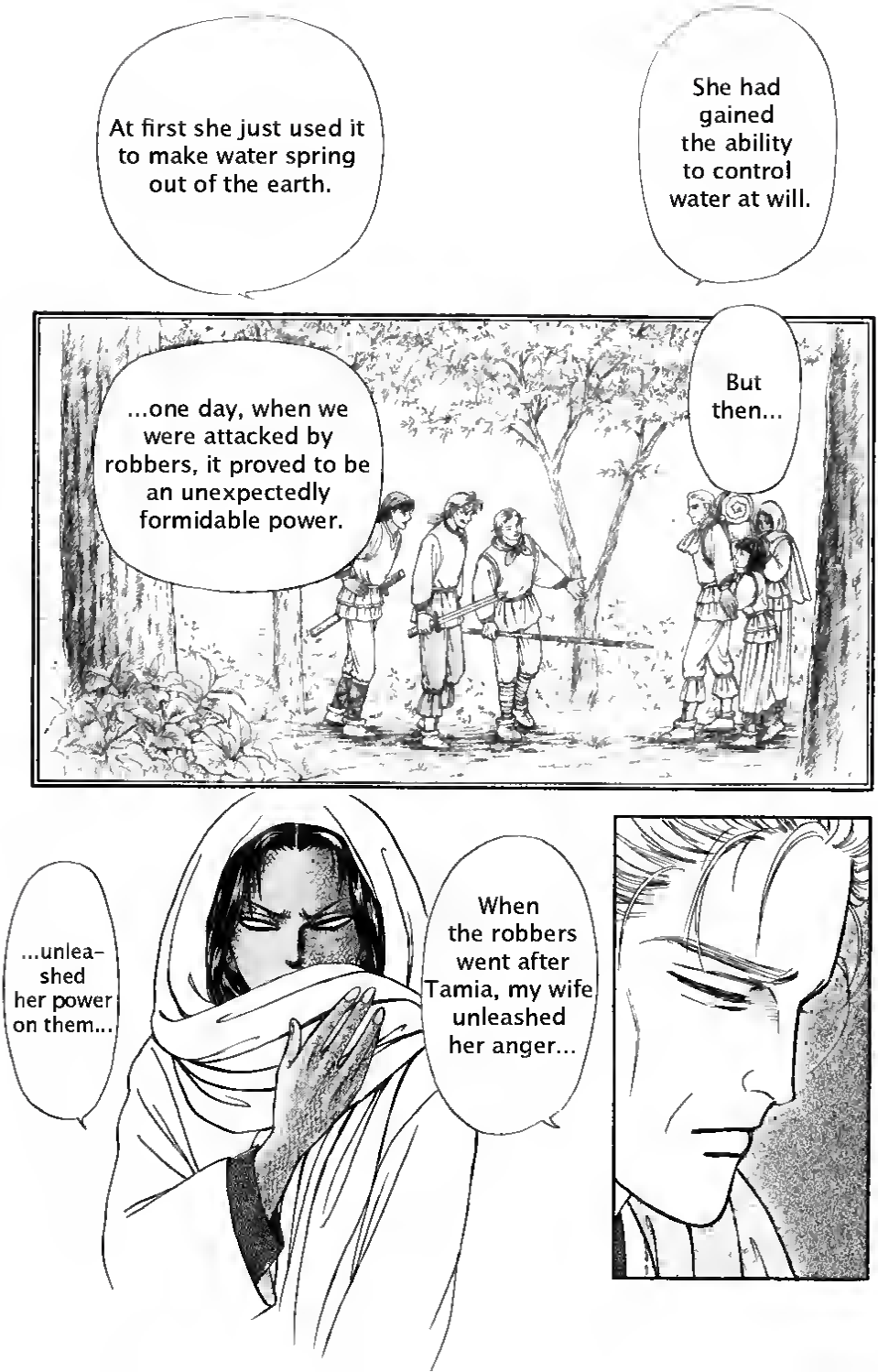
Even I, her husband...

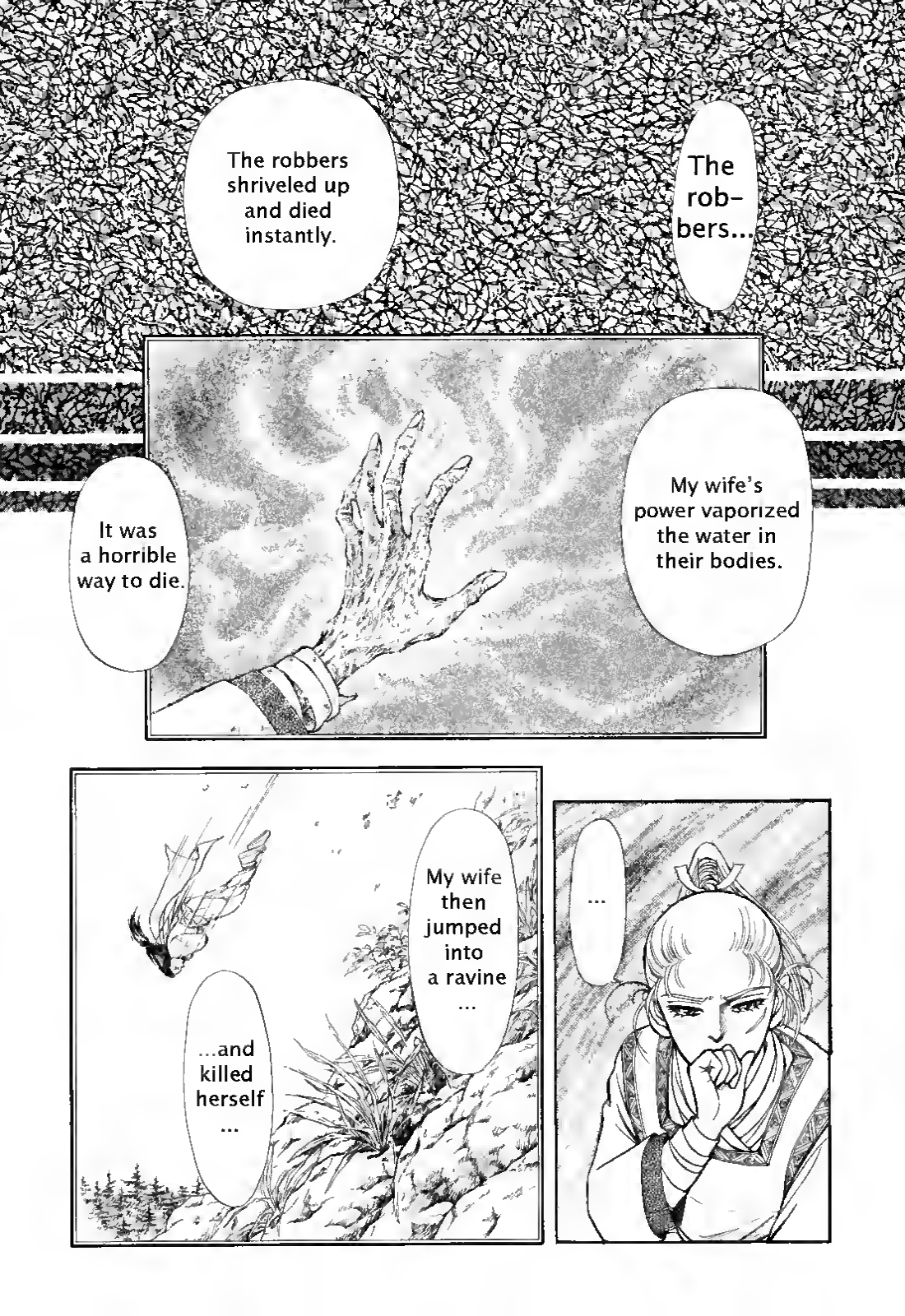

Even I...
But...
...everyone was afraid of her after her transformation.

...my wife's mental state deteriorated.
As we were driven out of the village and kept traveling to avoid scrutiny...

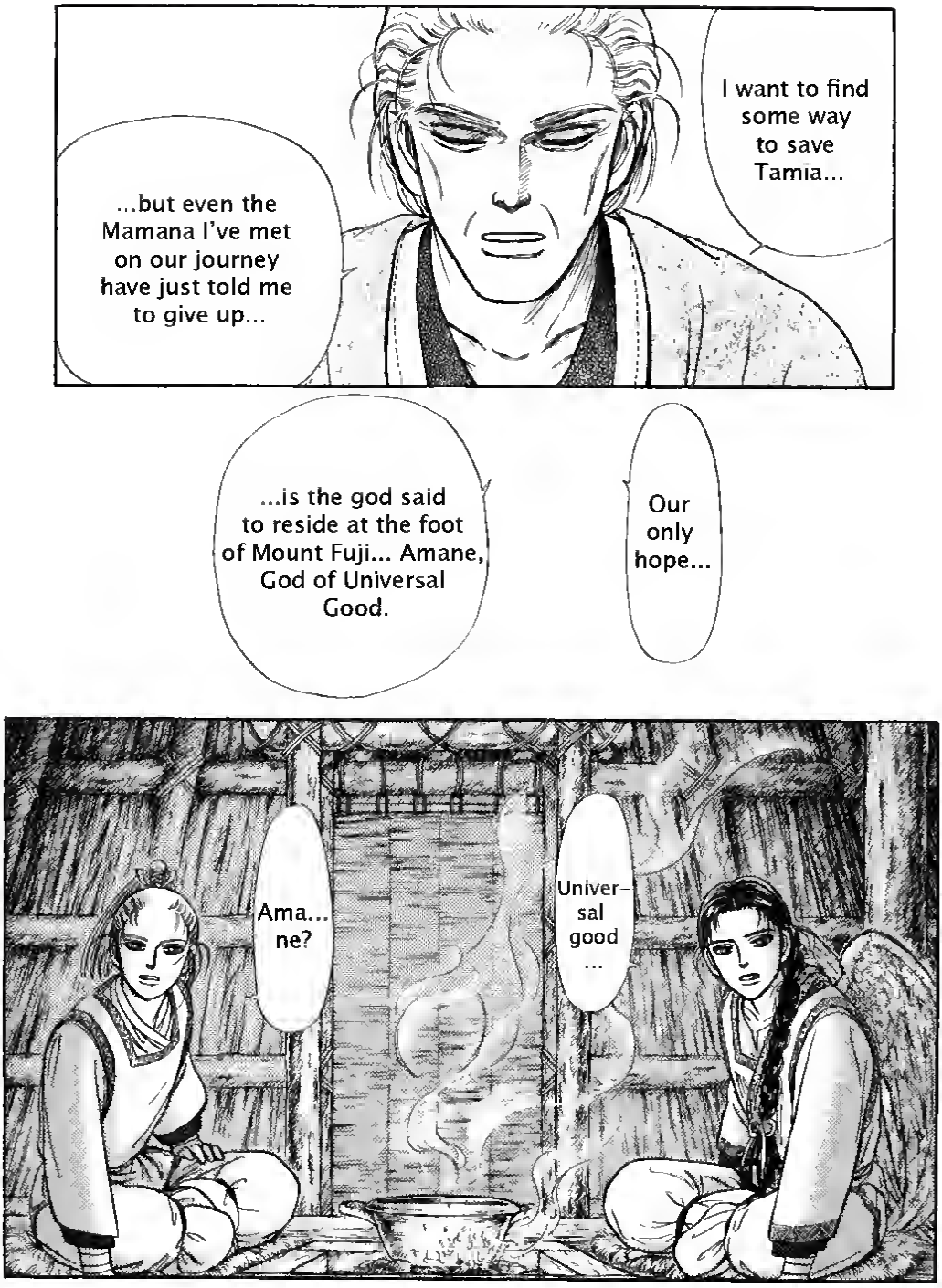

A power...?


One day, she became aware of a power she had gained in exchange for her transformed body.

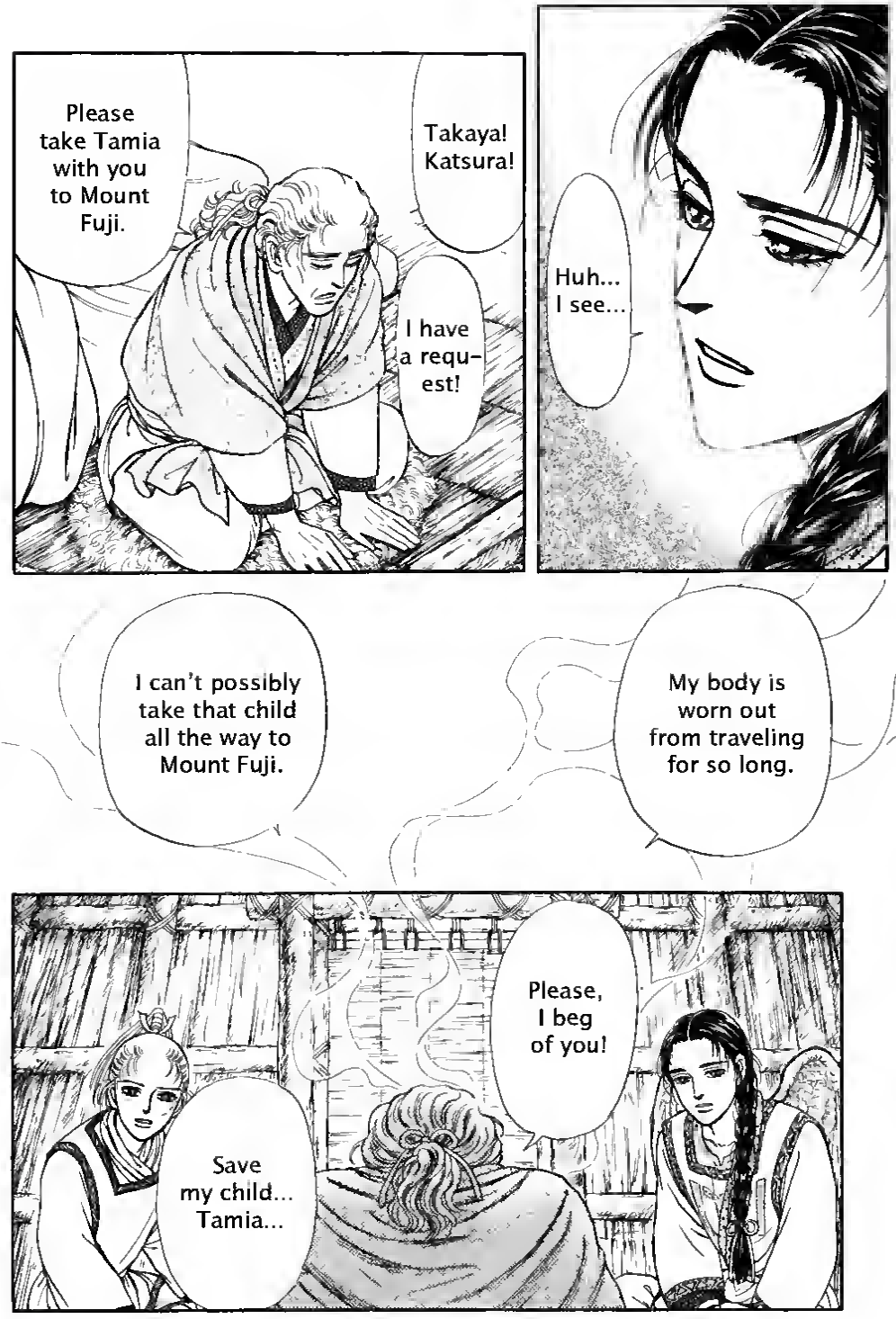

At first she just used it to make water spring out of the earth.
She had gained the ability to control water at will.
...one day, when we were attacked by robbers, it proved to be an unexpectedly formidable power.
But then...
...unlea-shed her power on them...
When the robbers went after Tamia, my wife unleashed her anger...

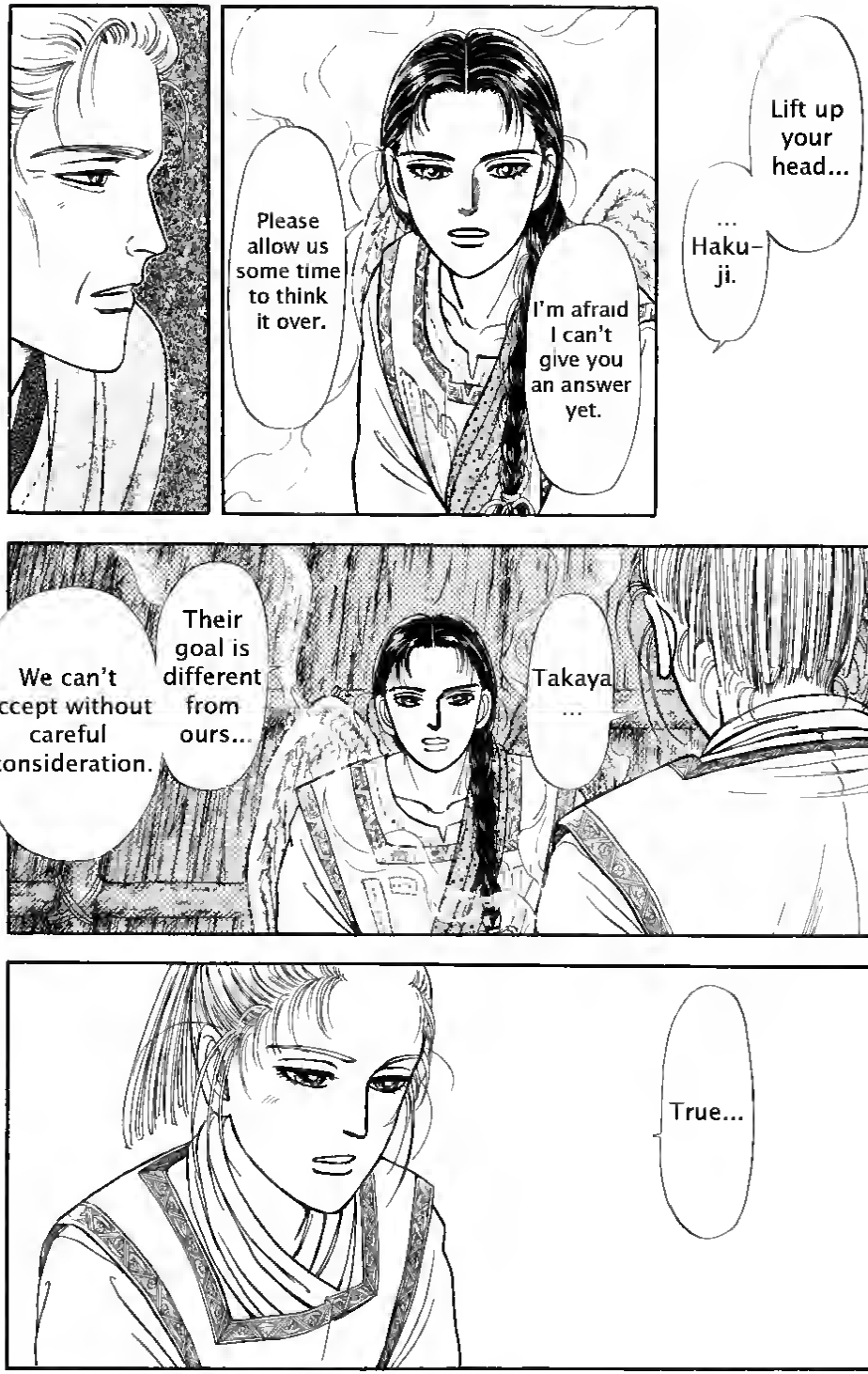

The robbers shriveled up and died instantly.
The rob-bers...
It was a horrible way to die.
My wife's power vaporized the water in their bodies.
...and killed herself ...
My wife then jumped into a ravine ...
...

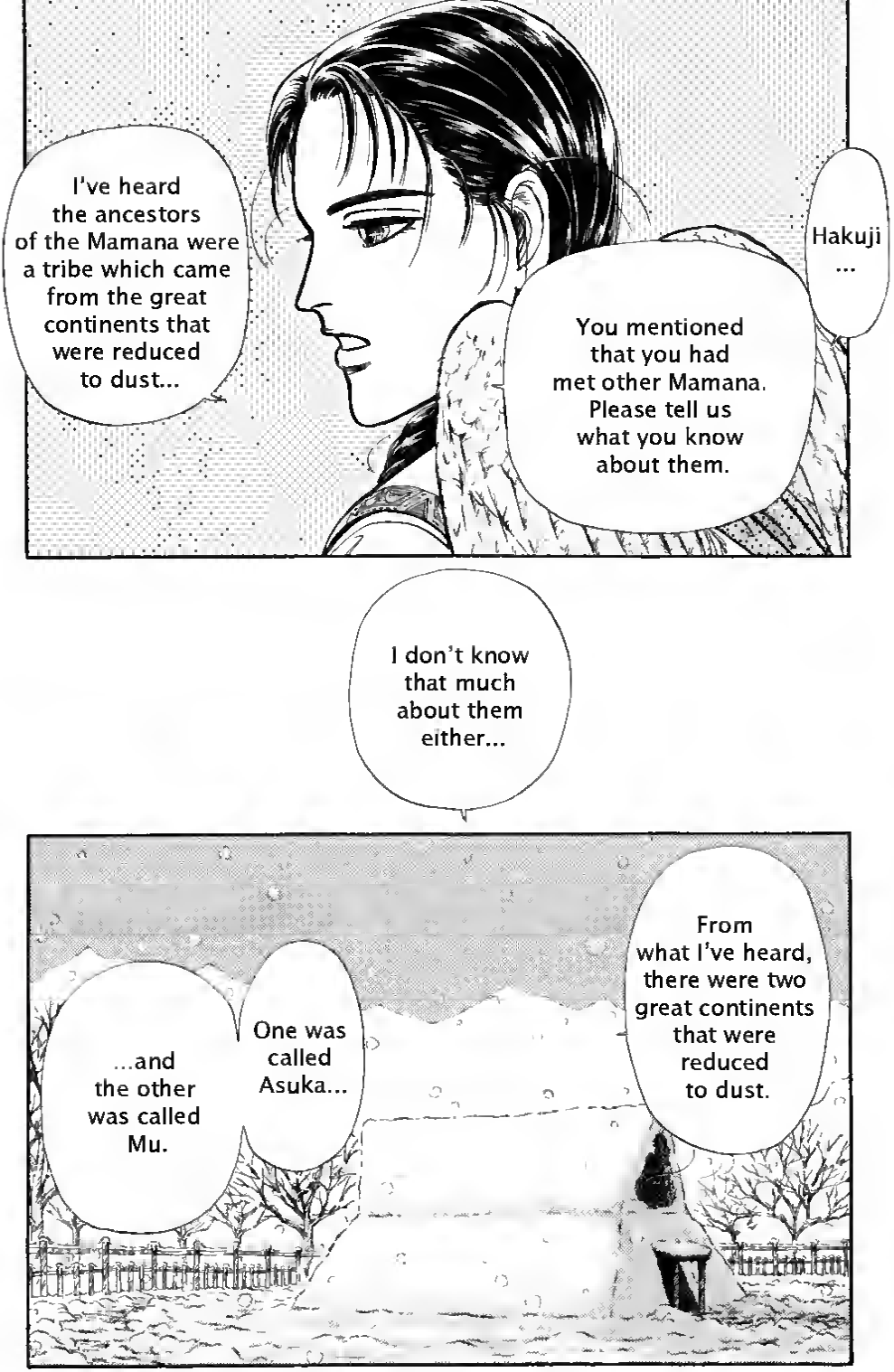
Tamia had fainted, so she was spared that horrible scene.
...and told Tamia that her mother had fallen into it with the thieves.
I threw the desiccated bodies of the robbers into the ravine...
...

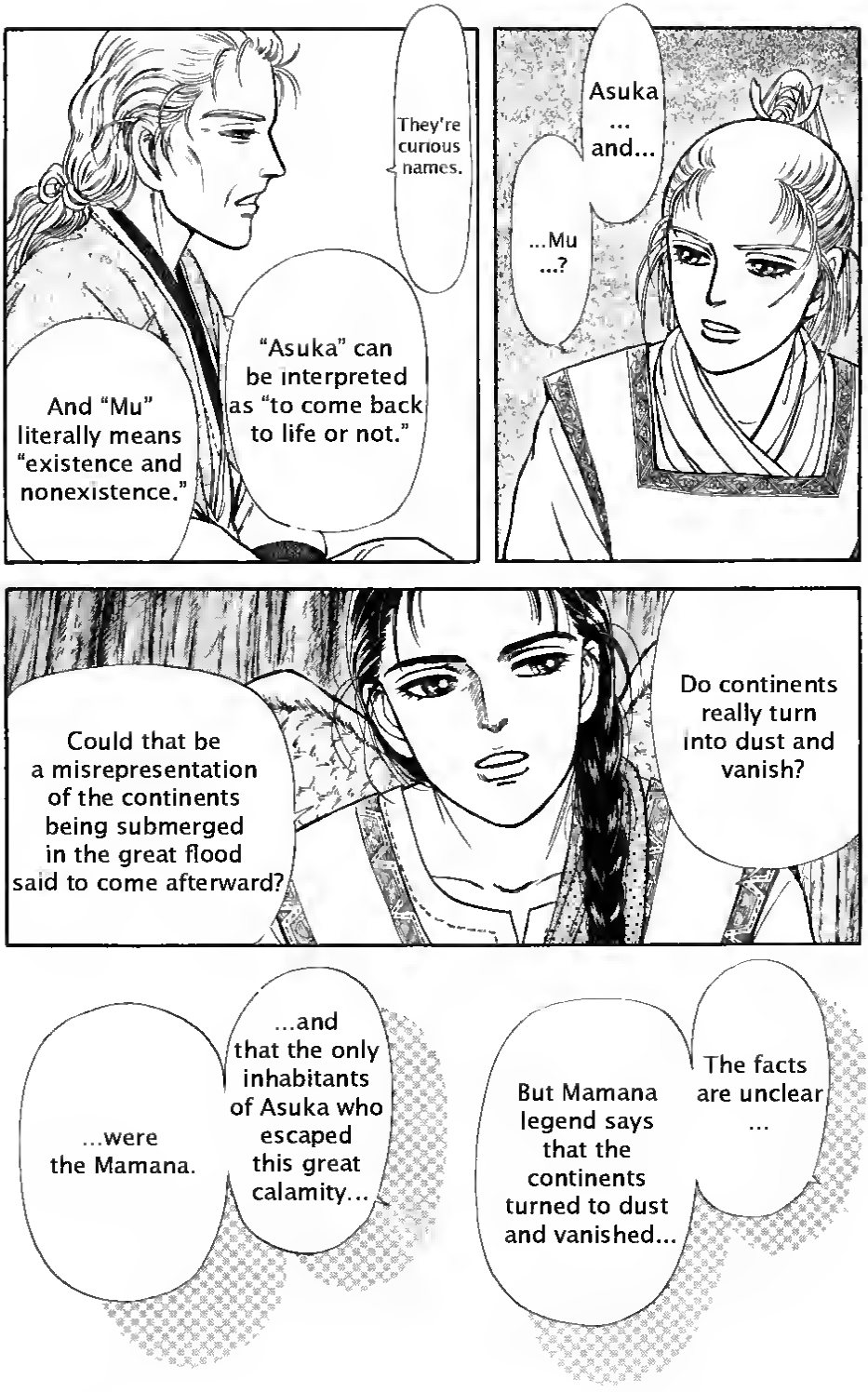

I want to find some way to save Tamia...
...but even the Mamana I've met on our journey have just told me to give up...
Our only hope...
...is the god said to reside at the foot of Mount Fuji... Amane, God of Universal Good.
Univer-sal good ...
Ama... ne?

...who heals all kinds of diseases and bestows health and happiness on people.
I've heard Lord Amane is a demigod...
Huh ...!
What a coinci-dence...
We were told to go to Mount Fuji by Risson, God of the True Law, the demigod we were serving.
No...
Those who enter the land under Lord Amane's rule settle down there and live in peace...
...so there are actually no detailed reports about what kind of place it is.
So?
Have you heard anything else about this demigod?


Please take Tamia with you to Mount Fuji.
Takaya! Katsura!
I have a request!
Huh... I see...
I can't possibly take that child all the way to Mount Fuji.
My body is worn out from traveling for so long.
Please, I beg of you!
Save my child... Tamia...

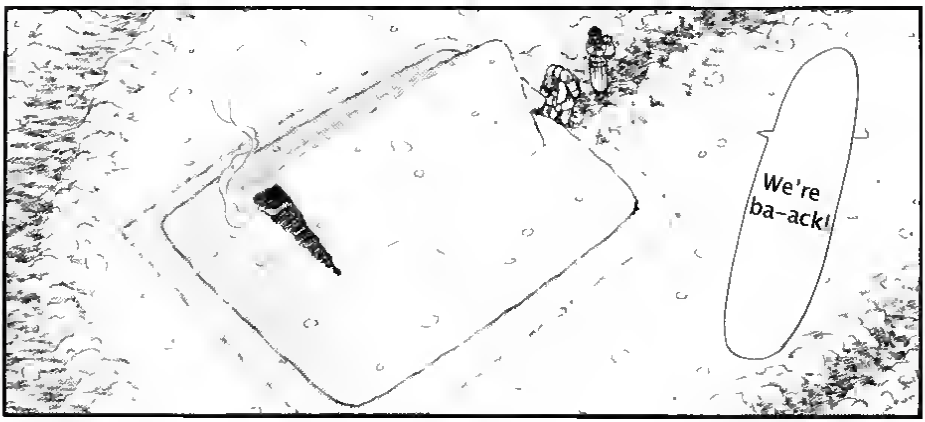

Lift up your head...
... Haku-ji.
Please allow us some time to think it over.
I'm afraid I can't give you an answer yet.
We can't accept without careful consideration.
Their goal is different from ours...
Takaya ...
True...


I've heard the ancestors of the Mamana were a tribe which came from the great continents that were reduced to dust...
Hakuji ...
You mentioned that you had met other Mamana. Please tell us what you know about them.
I don't know that much about them either...
From what I've heard, there were two great continents that were reduced to dust.
One was called Asuka...
...and the other was called Mu.

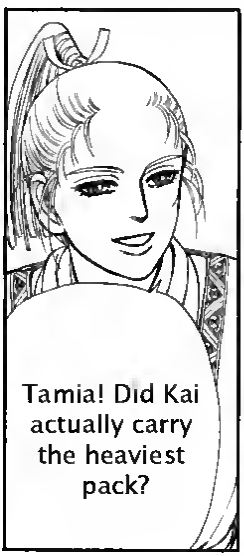

They're curious names.
"Asuka" can be interpreted as "to come back to life or not."
And "Mu" literally means "existence and nonexistence."
Asuka ... and...
...Mu ...?
Do continents really turn into dust and vanish?
Could that be a misrepresentation of the continents being submerged in the great flood said to come afterward?
The facts are unclear ...
But Mamana legend says that the continents turned to dust and vanished...
...and that the only inhabitants of Asuka who escaped this great calamity...
...were the Mamana.

What do you mean...?
Both continents are said to have had countless inhabitants...
...but, strangely enough, there was no direct interaction between them...
What about Mu?
There must have been people living there too.
Asuka learned of Mu through the technology developed out of its wisdom and knowledge ...
...and Mu clairvoyantly perceived the existence of Asuka through the unique abilities of its priests.
They may have deliberately avoided interaction because the two civilizations were completely different...
...or perhaps there was some reason they couldn't travel back and forth...

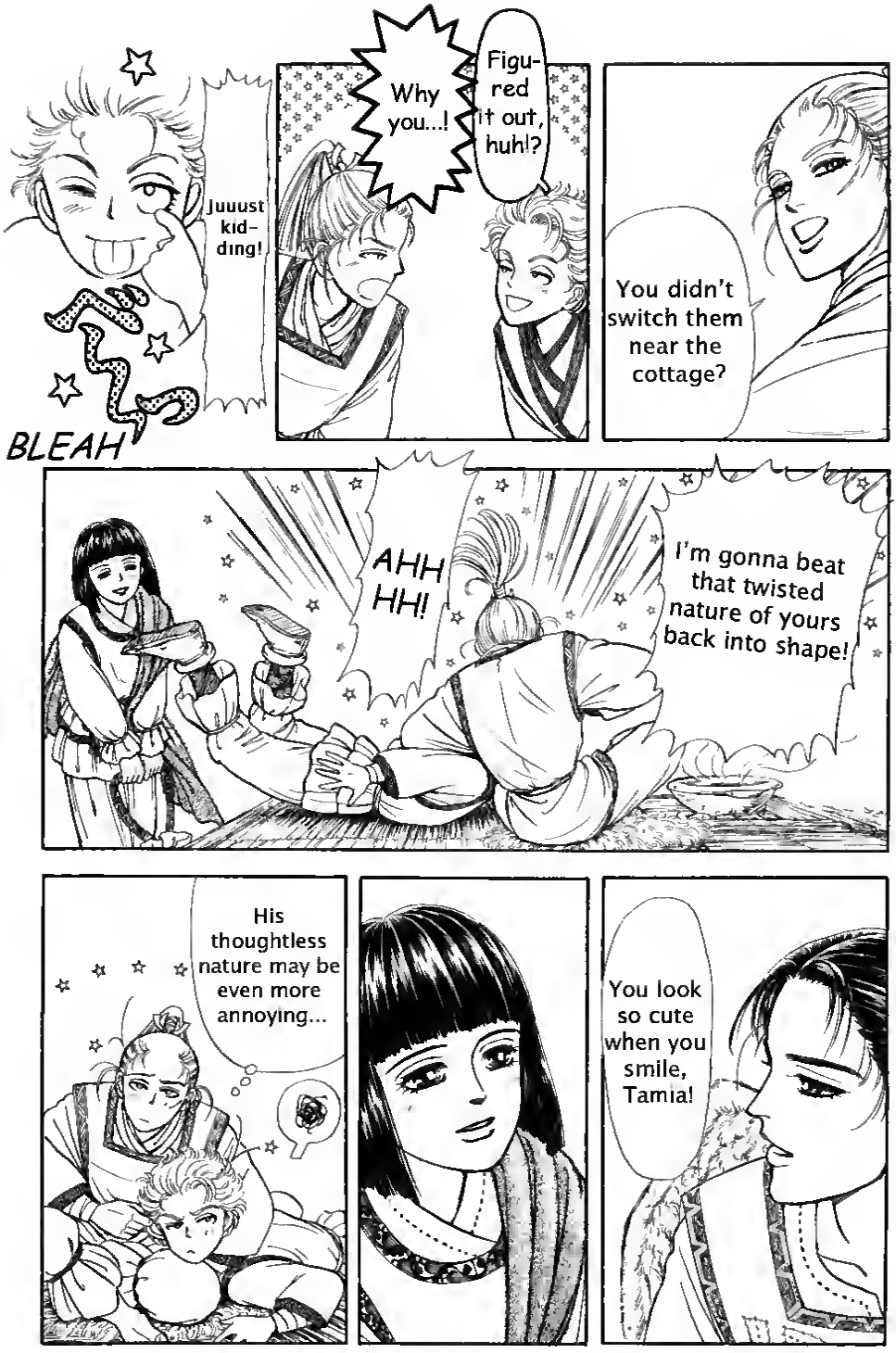
...
If they were capable of clairvoyance, they should have been able to foresee the disaster to some extent...


We're ba-ack!

Yes, I carried the heaviest pack!


Tamia! Did Kai actually carry the heaviest pack?

Ugh, it was so heavy
You must be tired!
Welcome home!


BLEAH
Juuust kidding!
Why you...!
Figured it out, huh!?
You didn't switch them near the cottage?
AHH HH!
I'm gonna beat that twisted nature of yours back into shape!
His thoughtless nature may be even more annoying...
You look so cute when you smile, Tamia!

I eavesdropped on the Captain's talk with Hibiki and told Aohiko about it.
Yes!

I didn't want them to think you were a coward!
Stop glaring at me, will you!?

Yes ...
That's true.
He really is stupid...
...to have gone to such lengths to save you...
What a stupid man. Now he's completely turned Hibiki against him...
He did it to save you.
...to save Hibiki.
Aohiko didn't jump into that situation...
Right?

SWISH
I-if you hate Aohiko, kill him already.
...!!
GULP
Y-you'll ...
...never defeat that man...
...defeat... you.
...he's not trying... to...
...becau-se...

BAM
SHUNK
Shall I love you...
...like the edge of a sword?
I'll make you regret ...
...ever having dogged my foots-teps.

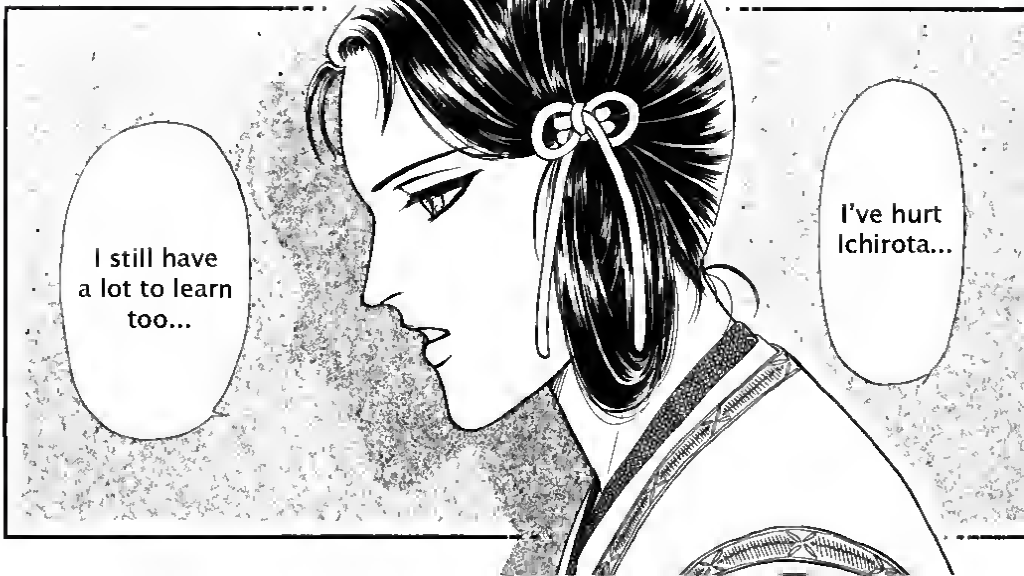
I'll chop you to bits and throw you out.
Y-you can't defeat me either...
I'm never going to regret this...

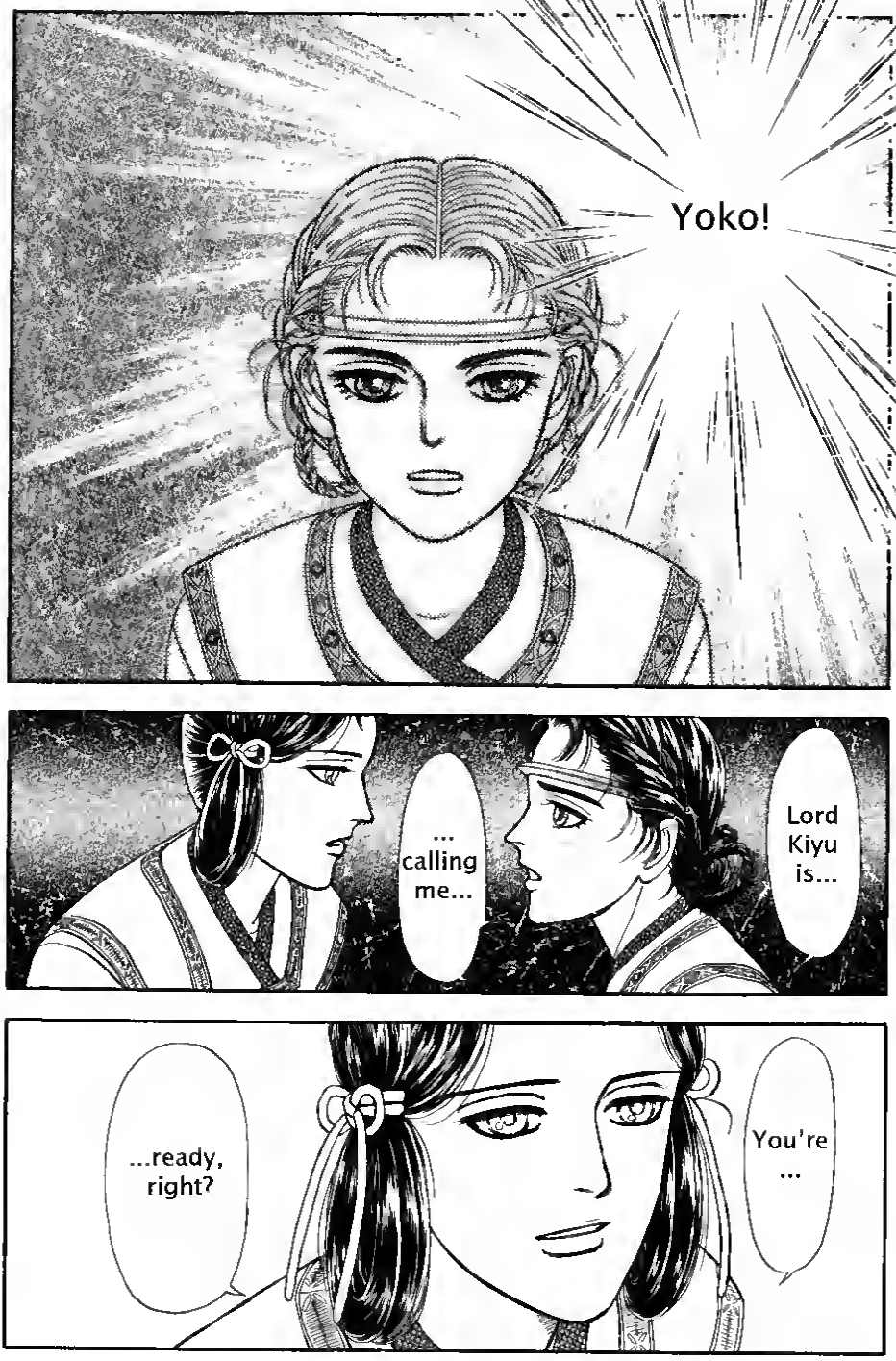
This is Yoko's ability, right...?
Yep! Yoko is really good at treating wounds.
Just a little longer ...
I'm fine now... Get some rest tonight.
You must be worn out from concentrating your life force!
Sounds like he's having a good time...
Yo-ko!
SNORE
Aohiko-o
Yuck
Kee hee hee hee...

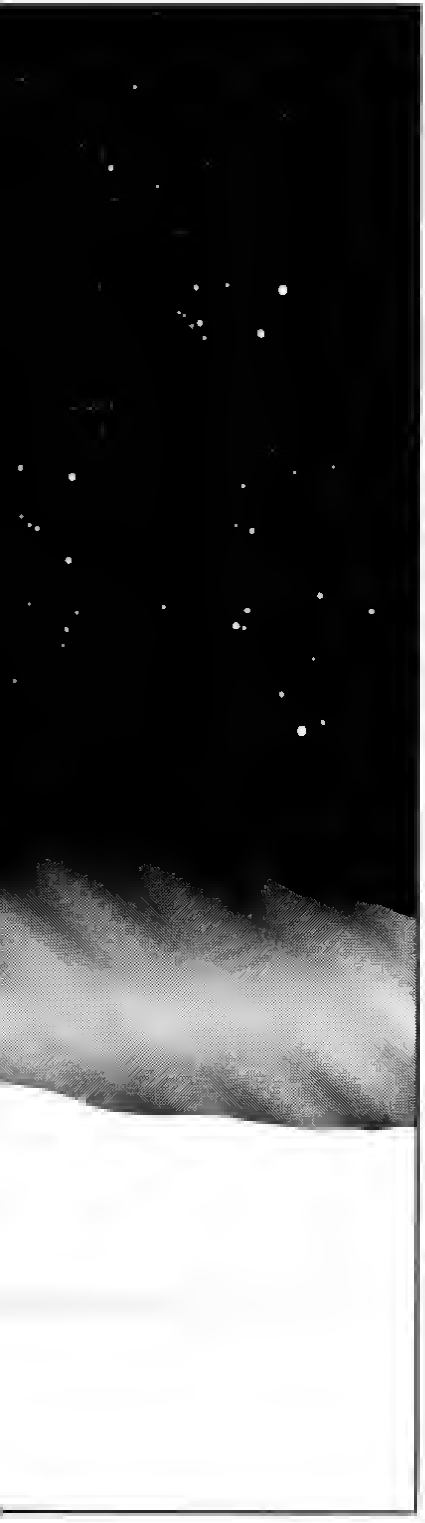
I learned something from you today...
I...
If you hadn't stepped in at that moment...
When I I ook at Kyoji, I realize how limited my thinking is.
...I would have probably attacked Ichirota to stop him...
Ichirota would have pulled his sword out of Hibiki to fend me off...
But then the demon headband would have made Hibiki go crazy, and...
...I shudder to think what would have happened next...

I carelessly rely on my sword...
I'm not capable of that yet... dropping my sword and grabbing his with my bare hand...
...or making a split-second decision that that is the best solution...

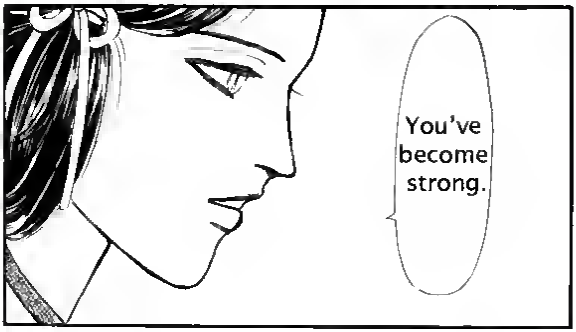
I'm more than twice your age.
I'm a little quicker at making judgments.
But ...
...I've made my share of mistakes...
I've said things better left unsaid...


I've hurt Ichirota...
I still have a lot to learn too...


Yoko!
Lord Kiyu is...
...calling me...
You're ...
...ready, right?

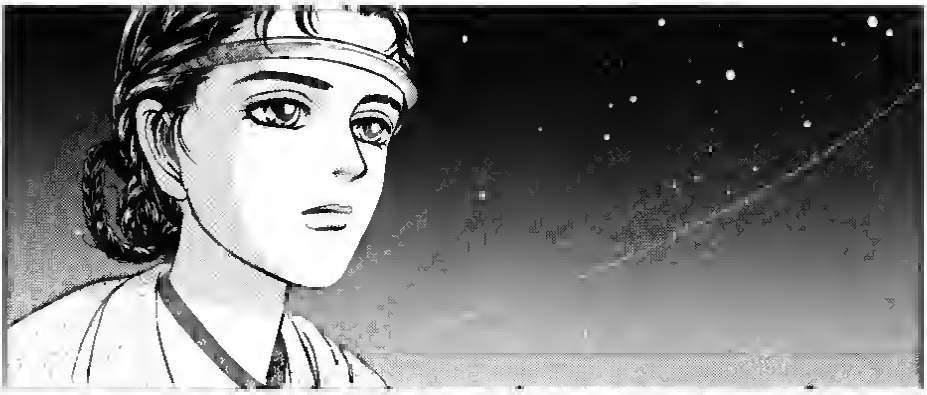


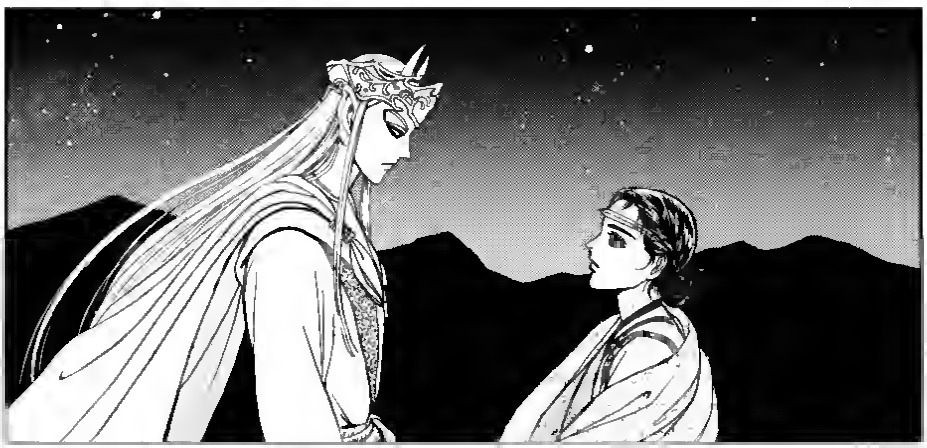
Yes...


You've become strong.

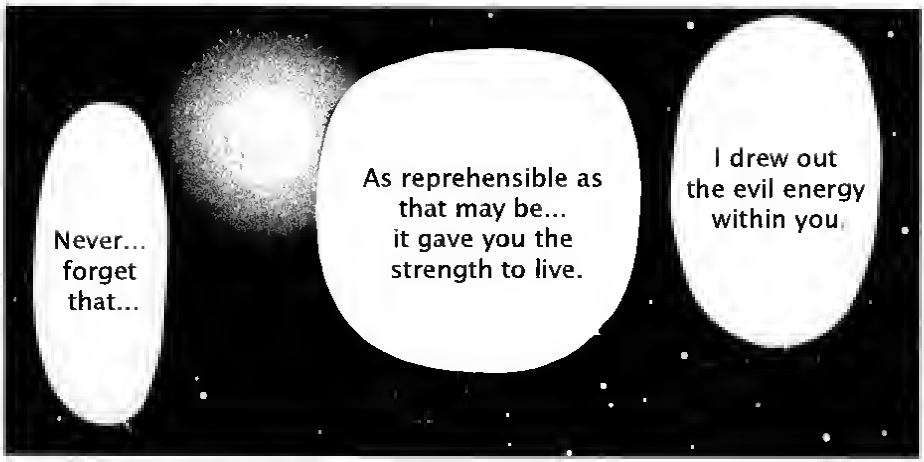
I wonder how much more you're going to change...
Don't worry ...
...and how much longer I can watch it happen...

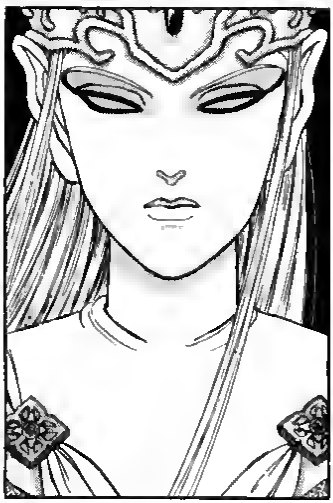
Come closer...

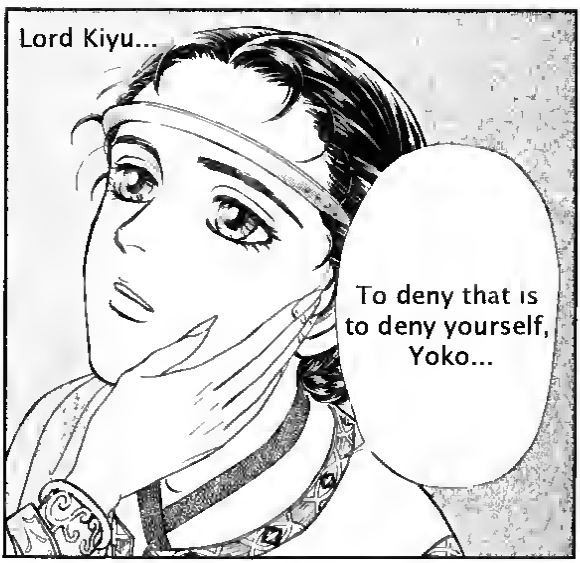


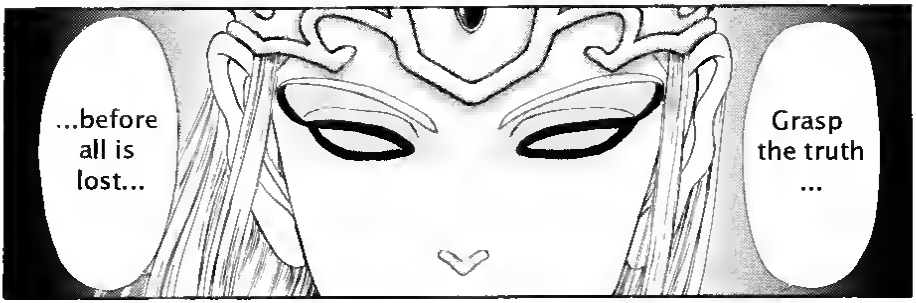


Child with a strange destiny ...


Never... forget that...
As reprehensible as that may be... it gave you the strength to live.
I drew out the evil energy within you.




Lord Kiyu...
To deny that is to deny yourself, Yoko...


...before all is lost...
Grasp the truth ...

Grasp the true nature of this war ...
What is it about this wavelength...?

I feel as if I knew it...
Despair and... deep sorrow...

...long...
...long ago...
What makes you sad ...?
I won't leave you, even if you cry...
...or those tears ...
I won't leave Yoko ...
...or Toko...

To be continued...

Itihasa 8

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